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Another thriller adds to the hope of a true title contest in 2021

For a sport that often gets criticised for being boring and predictable, Formula 1 has thrown up some brilliant contests in recent months. The Italian, Tuscan, Turkish and Sakhir Grands Prix last year all had their fair share of drama and intrigue, and last weekend's Emilia Romagna race at Imola continued the trend.

Yes, a wet track normally does shake things up and creates exciting moments, but even before it lined up in Italy the grid looked intriguing. How would Red Bull play its cards now that it finally had two cars at the front? Could Lewis Hamilton pull off another miracle and defeat the faster RB16Bs? Who would top the tight midfield scrap?

The rain added extra challenges and chaos to the event, and most drivers made an error one way or another. But, as Alex Kalinauckas shows in our report on page 18, it was Max Verstappen and Hamilton who came out on top. They had an early wheel-to-wheel fight that just about stayed on the hard-but-fair side of things, the pace advantage ebbed and flowed, and both escaped errors. Hamilton is now one point ahead in the championship fight we've all been waiting to see.

Just as attention-grabbing was the clash between Valtteri Bottas and George Russell (p26). Neither came out of it well, but it has added an extra bit of spice to the battle for the second Mercedes seat that will be one of the big 2021 subplots. Rubbish, this F1, isn't it?!



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NEXT WEEK
29 APRIL

World Endurance preview
What to expect from
the start of a new
sportscar era



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US CITY RACES BACK ON F1 MENU WITH MIAMI GP

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 has announced that the Miami Grand Prix will finally join the calendar for 2022 after receiving final approvals last week. It means that the tradition of F1 grands prix in US cities will be revived, after races in Long Beach, Las Vegas, Detroit, Dallas and Phoenix from the 1970s to the 1990s (see right).

Miami has been a long-sought addition to the F1 calendar since Liberty Media acquired the series in 2017 and pushed to expand its footprint in the US. Initial plans to hold a street race around the Miami port area in 2020 were quickly abandoned before attention was shifted to a location around the Hard Rock Stadium, home to the Miami Dolphins NFL team.

Despite frequent opposition from a number of local groups that has already forced the track layout to change, city commissioners voted in favour of a new resolution, paving the way for a formal announcement last Sunday. A purpose-built, 19-corner, 3.36-mile track will host the inaugural Miami Grand Prix in 2022, starting a 10-year deal for the race. It ensures that there will be two American races on the calendar next year including the established US Grand Prix at Circuit of The Americas in Texas, fulfilling a long-held ambition for F1.

"The US is a key growth market for us, and we are greatly encouraged by our growing reach in the US which will be further supported by this exciting second race," said F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali. "We will be working closely with the team from Hard Rock Stadium and the FIA to ensure the circuit delivers sensational racing but also leaves a positive and lasting contribution for the people in the local community."

The agreement includes a \$5million commitment to fund community programmes and local businesses, as well as creating a STEM scheme for local children.

Race promoter Tom Garfinkel, who also serves as CEO of the Miami Dolphins, was optimistic of the benefits F1 would bring to the city. "The Hard Rock Stadium entertainment campus in Miami Gardens exists to host the biggest global events to benefit the entire greater Miami region, and Formula 1 racing is as big as it gets," he said. "We have worked with specialist designers to create a race track that we, Formula 1

"AMERICA HAS GIVEN US A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY. THE RIGHT APPROACH IS A SECOND GP"

and the FIA believe will provide great racing."

But local opposition to the race remains, with residents' activist leader Brenda Martin Providence accusing the city council of "flip-flopping" on locals. "It makes us very angry," she said. "We just don't want it in our neighbourhood. This is a billion-dollar corporation. You send us \$5m and expect us to be OK with that? The money that it brings to them, it won't bring to us."

The US Grand Prix in Austin is not set to be paired with Miami on the calendar, ensuring that both events have breathing space on the schedule. COTA is currently out of contract after 2021, but talks over a new deal from 2022 are under way. "We will keep them separate, in order to give the right space for both," said Domenicali. "This is really crucial. We



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are proud as F1 because we are looking ahead. We are putting the foundations for an incredible future of F1. And this is a milestone that we all wanted. America has given us a lot of opportunity, and a lot of interest. We do believe that the right approach is a second grand prix." Domenicali said that he expects Miami to hold its first race in the second quarter of next year, pointing towards a possible pairing with the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal.

F1 is planning to stay at the existing 23-race level for its 2022 calendar despite the addition of Miami, meaning one of the current events – likely one in Europe – will drop off the schedule. It is also pushing for a grand prix in Africa within five years, and still hopes to bring Vietnam back to the schedule after the event collapsed before its inaugural running.

"We need to be realistic: we cannot have 52 weekends in F1," said Domenicali. "But the good thing is that we have a lot of interest that will enable us to create unique events. We're going to mix the strategic need for F1 to develop in certain countries with the historical places where we know that F1 should stay. So that's the beauty of having this many opportunities in front of us."

The reaction from the F1 paddock to the news was overwhelmingly positive. "When we shared the information with all the teams, everyone said, 'Wow, that's the right way to go, this is really where we should be,'" said Domenicali. "So this is really the direction we're going to take for a great future for F1."

LUKE SMITH, JONATHAN NOBLE AND CHARLES BRADLEY

US CITY RACES IN FORMULA 1

1 LONG BEACH

1976-83

It was a world – well, a continent at least – away from Watkins Glen. The traditional home of the US Grand Prix was in leafy rural New York State, with legions of mud-encrusted spectators. But the addition of a race in the California city of Long Beach, in those days down at heel verging on seedy, was a resounding success thanks to the vision of promoter Chris Pook. Clay Regazzoni took honours for Ferrari on the first visit, and over the years to follow Long Beach was transformed for the better. The classic original layout was altered for 1982, when Niki Lauda scored the first win of his comeback year with McLaren, and again in 1983, when John Watson stormed from 22nd on the grid to victory in his McLaren. Then Pook did a deal with the CART Indycar series. Even today Long Beach is the most blue-riband of IndyCar events behind the Indianapolis 500.

2 LAS VEGAS

1981-82

If you think Yas Marina is a rubbish place for a season finale, for two years the F1 crown was decided in the car park of the Caesar's Palace casino. The endless switchbacks of the layout won few fans, even inaugural winner Alan Jones (Williams). That race was famous for Jones's team-mate Carlos Reutemann's mysterious loss of pace, resulting in an exhausted Nelson Piquet claiming the title. Michele Alboreto triumphed for Tyrrell in 1982, as Keke Rosberg clinched the crown. The CART Indycar series took over for 1983-84, running a perimeter

'semi-oval' layout, before the race disappeared, with few lamenting it.

3 DETROIT

1982-88

"Let's have an F1 race in 'Motor City'. That's bound to get America interested." Only problem was, the tortuous layout around the Renaissance Center was slower even than Monaco – in a country where people were used to 200mph-plus speeds at Indy. Rosberg famously said at Las Vegas in 1982, when asked why the Caesar's Palace track was no longer his least favourite: "Well, since then we've been to Detroit." Watson won from 17th on the grid in his McLaren in 1982, before Alboreto and Tyrrell gave the Cosworth DFV its sendoff victory in 1983. In its last three years, before the primitive facilities sent F1 packing, the race was won by Ayrton Senna.

4 DALLAS

1984

The track kept breaking up in the boiling Texan July heat. Nigel Mansell famously collapsed as he pushed his stricken Lotus to the finish line. And iron man Rosberg wrestled his recalcitrant Williams-Honda to victory on what must count as one of F1's worst venues.

5 PHOENIX

1989-91

Another stop-start street circuit. It wasn't as unpopular as Vegas or Dallas, but that's not saying much. McLaren won all three events (Alain Prost once, Senna twice). But the penny dropped when a nearby ostrich race on the same day attracted a bigger crowd.





Turkish GP tipped to replace Canada amid COVID worries

FORMULA 1

The Turkish Grand Prix is tipped to rejoin the Formula 1 calendar this season with the likely cancellation for the second year running of the Canadian GP in Montreal.

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced last year's Canadian race to be scrapped, officials remained hopeful of bringing F1 back to the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for 11-13 June. But reports in Canada last week claimed that the decision had been taken to cancel the event, amid concerns over the risks associated with F1 visitors mixing with local circuit staff and volunteers.

Tight restrictions are currently in place in Canada, requiring those arriving in the country to quarantine. F1 has been in talks with the government over exemptions for those entering Canada for the race, hoping to gain a break that would make the event viable, and even considered reviving the 'biosphere' plan from last year's Abu Dhabi GP.

F1 remains adamant that it is still in talks with the promoter in Canada and the government to try to save the race. But the temporary nature of the street circuit on the Ile Notre-Dame means a longer lead time is required for its construction to be completed. The grand prix promoter claimed that it was yet to receive confirmation from public health officials on restrictions for the race, and would not comment until it did so.

Autosport understands that Turkey's Istanbul Park circuit is lining up to replace Canada. The venue

staged its first grand prix for nine years in 2020 as part of the heavily revised schedule. Wet weather and a resurfaced track made for slippery conditions that shook up the order last November, paving the way for Lance Stroll to score his first F1 pole. But Lewis Hamilton was still able to secure victory and clinch his seventh F1 championship in the process.

Turkey was overlooked amid the initial tweaks to the 2021 schedule that brought the return of Imola and the Algarve Circuit in place of China and Vietnam, but has always been regarded as an additional back-up option.

With the Azerbaijan Grand Prix set to take place one week before the race in Canada, Turkey would make geographical sense as a replacement.

Germany's Nurburgring has also expressed an interest in hosting a race again this year, but has not held any firm talks with F1 specifically about doing so in place of Canada.

In other calendar news, the Spanish Grand Prix in Barcelona will take place behind closed doors next month following a ruling by the Catalan government. The borders of Catalonia are closed until 26 April as part of its COVID-19 restrictions. As there is no guarantee that this will change in time for the 7-9 May weekend, the decision has been taken to run the race without spectators.

Last weekend's Emilia Romagna GP was run behind closed doors, while no official announcement has yet been made about the upcoming Portuguese Grand Prix's status.

LUKE SMITH AND ADAM COOPER

Full(ish) layout for Monaco FE

FORMULA E

Formula E, the FIA and the Automobile Club de Monaco have finally unveiled the final circuit configuration that the electric single-seater championship will use for the E-Prix on 8 May.

The layout is five metres shorter than the contemporary Formula 1 route. Notable tweaks have been made at Sainte Devote, where the inside kerb has been moved, and the chicane at the exit of the tunnel, which has been modified.

The track previously broke off after Ste Devote to run downhill and rejoin the GP circuit at the harbour. These alterations for the fourth running of the Monaco Formula E race follow FIA president Jean Todt's desire to avoid direct comparisons with F1 and FIA Formula 2, which are scheduled to race there two weeks later.

"This discipline has its own identity – that's why, together with Formula E and the ACM, we've designed a bespoke layout which suits its particularities," said Todt.

As a result of the pandemic, the Monaco Historic GP, the E-Prix and F1 events will take place within five weekends of one another. Previously, the Historic GP and Formula E have alternated on a biennial basis.

ACM general commissioner Christian Tornatore said: "Organising three races in the space of one month will be a premiere for us all at ACM. The logistical side was complex, but not impossible to manage! Because of the new constraints, we needed to start setting up the track earlier than usual, at the end of February, instead of 15 March. We will integrate the technical aspects, on and around the track, required by every category that will be involved."

MATT KEW



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DAKAR RALLY French rally ace Guerlain Chicherit has been testing his bioethanol-fuelled GCK Thunder buggy for next year's Dakar Rally, while plans evolve for his 2023 attack: in a hydrogen-hybrid machine. Chicherit is combining his passions for environmental change and extreme motorsport while conforming with the aims of GCK (Green Corp Konnection) to compete without using fossil fuels. The 2023 weapon will be known as e-Blast H2, incorporating a high-performance fuel cell developed by GCK and global engineering giant FEV. "I've made no secret of my passion for Dakar and my desire to return to racing it," said Chicherit. "The development programme – along with the work we're doing to reduce the event's environmental impact – makes me super-excited."

Aston Martin queries F1 rulemaking process

FORMULA 1

Aston Martin is seeking clarity from the FIA over the process behind its Formula 1 aero rule tweaks for 2021 amid frustration over its low-rake-concept struggles.

The downforce cuts made by the FIA for 2021 on safety grounds appear to have hurt teams running low-rake cars more than their rivals, with Mercedes and Aston Martin losing out in particular.

Aston Martin team boss Otmar Szafnauer (right, below) vented his frustration over the rule changes at the Bahrain Grand Prix, but went a step further last weekend at Imola when he questioned whether it was right for the FIA to push the floor changes through on safety grounds, and whether the F1 organisation should be involved in the regulatory process. "The right thing to do is to have the discussions with the FIA, and find out exactly what happened and why," he said on Friday. "Then we can see if something can be done to make it more equitable."

Aston's idea of tweaking the aerodynamic rules mid-season was widely panned by rival teams, with Red Bull team boss Christian

Horner calling the suggestion "naive".

"There is a process for regulations to be introduced and they were voted through unanimously through the different regulations," said Horner. "Aston Martin would have had to vote for them before being passed through the Formula 1 Commission and the World Council. They were all voted through unanimously. It seems a little naive to think that suddenly the rules are going to get changed after the sample of a single race after the process has been fully followed. I'm struggling to get my head around that."

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said that while Aston had the right to ask the FIA to review the process, he believed that the team was simply "collateral damage" in the move to peg back the reigning champion squad.

Speaking after the race on Sunday, Szafnauer backtracked on his initial claims, saying he was now "pretty satisfied that all the correct steps were followed" and that talks were ongoing. "We're just trying to discover what all the steps were to make sure that it was done properly, and equitably," he said. "So that's the reason for the discussion."

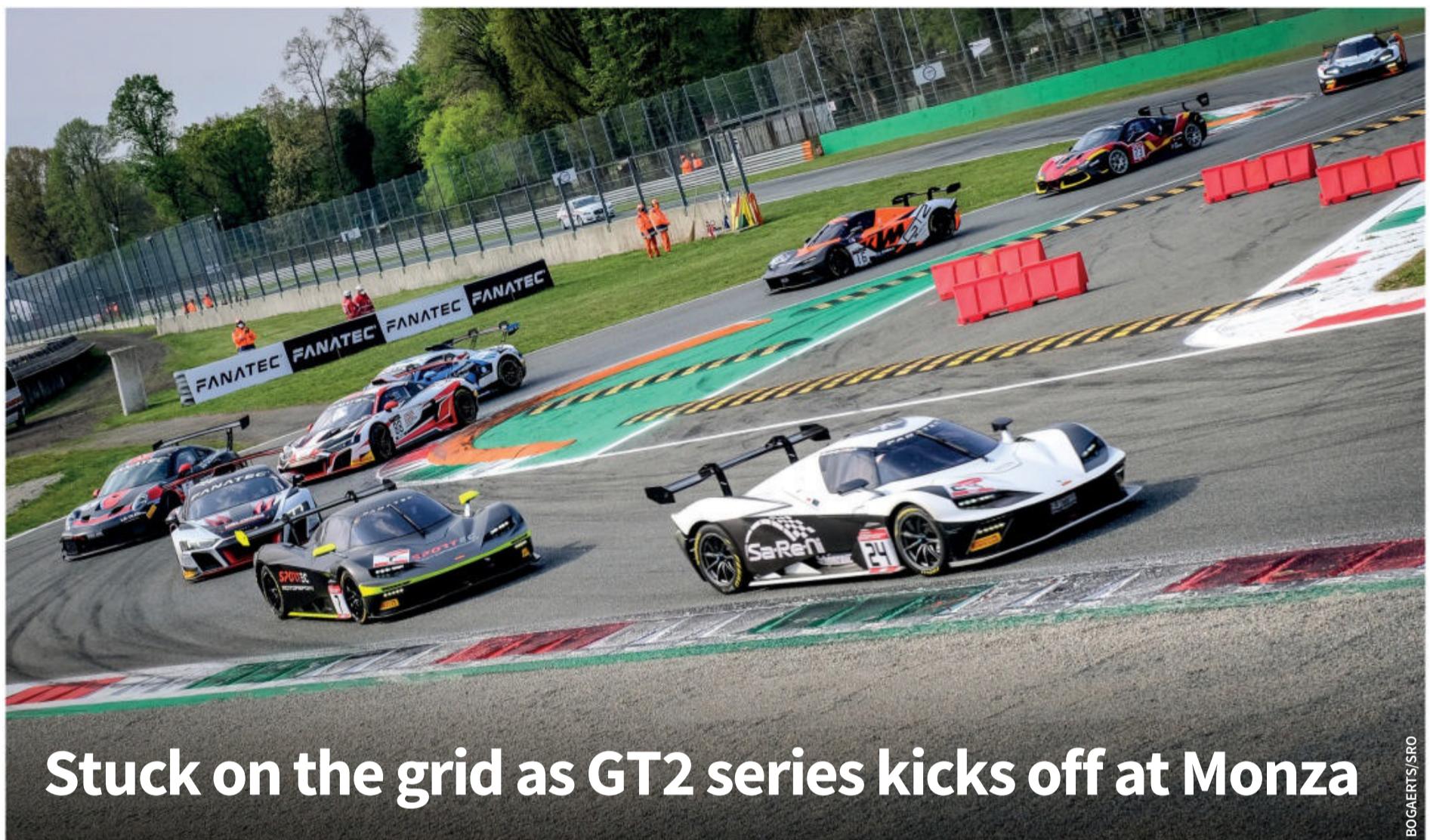
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FIA POOL



BOGAERTS/SRO

Stuck on the grid as GT2 series kicks off at Monza

GT2 EUROPEAN SERIES

Two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Hans Stuck was on the grid when the new-for-2021 GT2 European Series kicked off at Monza last weekend. The 70-year-old was making his first race start in four years at the wheel of one of five Reiter Engineering-developed KTM X-Bow GT2s.

Three Audi R8 LMS GT2s, two of the reworked GT2-spec Lamborghini Huracan Super Trofeos, a solo Porsche 911 GT2 RS Clubsport and a Ferrari 488 Challenge competing on an invitational basis completed the 12-car field. It wasn't a bad start, reckoned GT boss Stephane Ratel, the architect of the new category.

"I never said it was going to be easy," he said. "If I can have another two cars next time [at Hockenheim in May] and another two cars every race after that I'll be happy."

The Frenchman, who took part in the race in the Audi he has bought to help the series on its way, remains convinced that GT2 will be a success. "The ratio of performance to cost means it cannot fail," he explained. "The fastest cars were lapping two seconds from the best GT3s, but the cost remains very similar to GT4."

Ratel predicted that more manufacturers, as well as what he calls special tuners of Reiter's ilk, will commit to the category once they see it is a reality. He did, however, admit disappointment that there weren't

more Porsches given the 200 GT2 RSs sold: "To get only one was a major shock, because there must be 60 cars in Europe."

Stuck, who officially retired from the cockpit back in 2011, said he "really enjoyed the driving and the event". He now plans to return at all but one of the remaining four rounds with rally driver Kris Rosenberger.

Stuck and Rosenberger just missed out on victory in the Am class in the second of the two Monza races, while Ratel, who was sharing with Luca Pirri, came within 0.6 seconds of an outright win in the same race. Audis won both races, the first with Anders Fjordbach and Mark Patterson, the second with Bert Longin and Peter Guelinckx.

GARY WATKINS

Foster heads the Brits on sportscar debut

LE MANS CUP

British Formula 4 race victor Tommy Foster won on his sportscar debut in the Le Mans Cup race at Barcelona last weekend.

Foster, 19, was lying third in the RLR Msport Ligier JS320 that had been started by Michael Benham as the two-hour race entered its closing stages, behind second-placed fellow Brit Matt Bell and leader Garrett

Grist. All three still had to make their second mandatory pitstop.

Bell had already pitted when a full course yellow was called, and Foster took advantage to make his stop as Grist passed the pit entry.

While Foster went on to victory, Grist and Rob Hodes were penalised from second down to fifth for violating the minimum pitstop time in their Team Virage Ligier. That promoted

Wayne Boyd to third behind United Autosports team-mate Scott Andrews, while Bell's Cool Racing Ligier finished up in fourth.

A spin into the gravel for British F3 graduate Josh Skelton limited him and polewinning Cool Ligier co-driver Antoine Doquin to 14th, while multiple F3 Cup champion Cian Carey finished two laps down in 21st in TS Corse's Duqueine.

JAMES NEWBOLD



JEP



Gene back in world tin-tops

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP

Four-time World Touring Car Championship race winner Jordi Gene is to return to the arena after a decade away this season in the World Touring Car Cup.

The 50-year-old Gene, older brother of ex-Formula 1 racer Marc, will represent the official Cupra Leon Competicion line-up alongside up-and-coming Spanish star Mikel Azcona, who is 26 years his junior.

Gene (above) was a staple of the works SEAT team during the heyday of the WTCC from 2005-10, and scored a best championship finish of eighth. He had already been named with Azcona as representing SEAT sub-marque Cupra in the new electric Pure ETCR series, and now joins the WTCR squad run by Hungarian team Zengo Motorsport.

"I'm very excited to be back racing with Cupra and alongside a driver as skilled as Mikel," said Gene. "I've been involved in the development of the Cupra Leon Competicion, so I know what it's capable of. It's going to be an exciting season."

The remaining two drivers in Zengo's four-car WTCR line-up of Cupras are yet to be confirmed.

Meanwhile, Hyundai's official four-car

line-up will be augmented by an additional two-car team of all-new Elantra Ns run by Target Competition for Swedish siblings Andreas and Jessica Backman (below). Andreas, who is the older of the two, steps up to the WTCR with a TCR Europe race win under his belt, while his sister has stood on the podium in the same series.

Another addition to the WTCR grid for this year is the promising Gilles Magnus. The 21-year-old finished fifth in the standings in his rookie season last year, and retains the backing of the Belgian motorsport federation to remain among the Comtoyou Racing Audi RS3 LMS line-up, alongside Tom Coronel, Frederic Vervisch and Nathanael Berthon.



IN THE HEADLINES

NO TWO-DAY F1 WEEKENDS

Formula 1 boss Stefano Domenicali has ruled out a switch to two-day race weekends, an idea that came back into vogue when last year's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola ran to that format. Domenicali said that race promoters prefer the three-day schedule because it allows them to maximise ticket sales and revenue. "All the organisers really wanted to have a full experience for the people and for the crowd, so we need to respect that," he said.

WEBB JOINS SLOVAKIANS

World Endurance Championship stalwart Oliver Webb will race for the ARC Bratislava LMP2 squad this season. The Brit, a regular with the ByKolles LMP1 team since 2016, will share the Slovakian squad's Ligier-Gibson JSP217 with Miroslav Konopka in all the races bar next month's series opener at Spa due to a clashing commitment. Brits Darren Burke, a regular with the team in LMP3, and 2020 Porsche Sprint Challenge GB runner-up Tom Jackson will join Konopka in Belgium.

MARTIN INJURY DOUBT

MotoGP rookie Jorge Martin is in doubt for the next round, the Spanish Grand Prix at Jerez, after violently crashing his Pramac Ducati in FP3 at last weekend's Portuguese GP. The Spaniard sustained fractures to his right hand and ankle, and surgery was postponed from Monday of this week in order to give him time to recover from the blow on his head.

HUFF STAYS IN SWEDEN

Former World Touring Car champion Rob Huff will bid for a second successive TCR Scandinavia title this season. The Briton will remain at the wheel of the venerable Lestrup Racing Team Volkswagen Golf GTI with which he claimed honours in 2020. "I'm expecting a very tough championship, probably even tougher than last year," he said.

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Voisin smokes them off with Fagg

GT4 EUROPEAN SERIES

Ginetta Junior graduate Bailey Voisin scored a double win on his senior car racing debut in the GT4 European Series at Monza last weekend in a United Autosports McLaren 570S alongside Charlie Fagg.

The team entered a new partnership with HHC Motorsport for its return to GT racing this year and it brought immediate success, with the sister car of Dean Macdonald and Gus Bowers making it a 1-3 in class in

the opening race.

Voisin began the first contest fourth and was running third when an excellently timed pitstop around a safety car period gave Fagg the lead, which he maintained to the flag. Fagg – a two-time series race winner in 2017 – also led the early stages of race two, and Voisin reclaimed the advantage after the stops. He faced stiff competition from Antoine Potty, just keeping the Toyota driver at bay to complete the double win.

“I’m over the moon,” said Voisin. “The team did an amazing job all weekend and Charlie did an amazing job as well in helping me to understand what I needed to do. Monza has always been a strong track for McLaren so we were hoping to be at the sharp end, but it was a pleasant surprise to be on the top step of the podium, especially competing against other people who have a lot more experience in GT4s.

“As soon as I came out of the pits, the Toyota was quite

close so I knew it would be crucial to get a good out-lap. It wasn’t a straightforward win. I was under a lot of pressure and had to fight for it, so it’s quite a big confidence boost.”

It was a less successful debut for reigning British GT4 champion Jamie Caroline, who crashed his Villorba Corse-run Trivellato Racing Mercedes into Xavier Lloveras’s similar car at the beginning of a full course yellow period in the opening race, and did not start race two.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Rally Sweden heads north for 2022 in search for more snow

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Rally Sweden will relocate almost 500 miles north-east from Varmland for its 2022 World Rally Championship round to a more “snowsafe” part of the country.

Ostersund, Lulea and Umea were all considered as possible venues for the WRC’s regular winter event, and the last-named attracted the most support.

Rally Sweden CEO Glenn Olsson said Ostersund and Lulea had both “presented strong bids” to stage the WRC counter but, following discussions with stakeholders, “Umea is a more attractive concept”.

“All officials and other enthusiasts who have put in a lot of effort and commitment over the years should feel proud that we have managed to keep Sweden’s place in the World Championship,” added Olsson.

The change of venue ends Varmland’s



long association with the event, which was part of the inaugural WRC calendar in 1973. The event has been dogged by unseasonably warm weather in recent years, leading to cars competing on roads that were largely free of snow and ice.

Rally Sweden faced a fresh setback this year when it had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions in the country, with the well-received Arctic Rally Finland being called in to fill the void.

FIA rally director Yves Matton welcomed the new location for 2022. “Moving up north was a must, given the challenges we experienced in the last few years,” he said. “I’d like to praise the efforts of the Rally Sweden organisers for coming up with alternatives and securing this new base in

Umea for next year’s event. It is the chance to ensure the proper winter conditions we all dream about for a snow rally.”

Despite the news, Rally Sweden representatives have yet to sign an extended agreement with the WRC Promoter beyond 2022, but Olsson said he was “confident” that this would be done in the weeks ahead, a view shared by WRC Promoter events director Simon Larkin.

“Winter events are one of the WRC’s biggest challenges and Sweden has been a cornerstone winter event since the beginning of the championship,” he said. “We have great hopes for the future commercial and sporting development of this new chapter for Rally Sweden in Umea.”

JASON CRAIG



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F2 racers join Japanese grid

SUPER FORMULA

Ex-Formula 2 racers Nobuharu Matsushita and Giuliano Alesi will join the grid for this weekend's second round of the Super Formula championship at Suzuka.

While Alesi's likelihood of standing in for TOM'S Toyota veteran Kazuki Nakajima has already been detailed in these pages, the return of Matsushita was less expected. The seven-time F2/GP2 race winner competed for B-Max in the latter half of the 2020 season as a replacement for Sergio Sette Camara, culminating in a podium finish at the Fuji finale (above).

Both driver and team had been planning to extend that alliance into 2021, only for Honda to refuse to supply its former protege an engine. B-Max signed teenaged rookie Yves Baltas after that to secure its short-term future, but travel restrictions prevented the American from participating in pre-season testing and the Fuji opener.

Shortly after the Fuji race, Honda gave its belated blessing to the team's original plan, with Matsushita returning to the grid for the rest of the season as a result with B-Max. Baltas will miss Suzuka, but is hoping to join the grid from May's Autopolis round onwards.

Matsushita said that the end of B-Max's tie-up with Motopark and a lack of preparation time means he has low expectations for his return at Suzuka.

The sudden change of heart from Honda about supplying an engine for Matsushita follows the marque's motorsport boss Hiroshi Shimizu stepping down at the end of March. Shimizu was at the helm when Matsushita refused an offer to become a works Honda driver in Super Formula and Super GT at the end of 2019 in favour of another attempt at F2.

Alesi, meanwhile, stands in at TOM'S for Nakajima, who has World Endurance Championship testing commitments for Toyota and is likely to miss the following races too unless Japan's quarantine rules are eased. The Franco-Japanese Alesi looks set to be on double duty at Suzuka, where he is also listed in his regular TOM'S Super Formula Lights entry.

Sacha Fenestraz is another facing quarantine difficulties, and looks likely to again be replaced at Kondo Racing by Yuichi Nakayama. Meanwhile, Dandelion Racing starlet Tadasuke Makino is continuing to recover from meningitis, so Ukyo Sasahara will deputise again.

JAMIE KLEIN

IN THE HEADLINES

LUNDQVIST STARS IN LIGHTS

Ex-British Formula 3 champion Linus Lundqvist took victory at Barber Motorsports Park last weekend in the revived Indy Lights series, which was called off at the last minute in 2020. The Swede, who blitzed last year's Formula Regional Americas contest and thus won a Lights scholarship, led all the way from pole position to defeat Global Racing Group with HMD Motorsports team-mate and fellow British F3 graduate Benjamin Pedersen. Another GRG/HMD driver, David Malukas, won the second race from Lundqvist, who takes an early points lead.

AHMED MAKES US DEBUT

Another ex-British F3 champion, Enaam Ahmed, bagged a fifth and a ninth at Barber Motorsports Park on his Indy Pro 2000 debut, despite qualifying outside the top 10 for both races. Braden Eves and Australian Hunter McElrea were the winners.

CARROLL TO RACE AUDI

Ex-A1GP Team Ireland hero and Formula E racer Adam Carroll has lined up a driver in international sportscar racing for this season. Carroll will compete in International GT Open at the wheel of a Balfe Motorsport Audi R8 LMS, sharing with 2017 GT Open pro-am champion and team boss Shaun Balfe. They have tested the car at Silverstone.

BROWNING TO GERMAN F4

Reigning British Formula 4 champion Luke Browning will move across to race in the German F4 series this year with US Racing, the team headed by F1 race winner Ralf Schumacher and ex-Mercedes DTM boss Gerhard Ungar. It will be Browning's third season in F4 competition. He is not the only British driver on the grid, as Nico Rosberg protege Taylor Barnard will drive for the BWR squad (founded by ex-Team Rosberg personnel), while race winner Ollie Bearman is with Van Amersfoort Racing.

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So much to enjoy at Imola

The Emilia Romagna GP was a treat for fans, especially as it appears that the die has been cast for a season-long Hamilton-Verstappen struggle for supremacy

ALEX KALINAUKAS

There was plenty for Formula 1 fans to enjoy in last weekend's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. The absent Tifosi willing on Charles Leclerc as he delivered a near-faultless weekend. British motorsport fans enjoying Lando Norris and George Russell impressing yet again. And surely all fans erupting in relief when Russell and Valtteri Bottas were able to climb out of the wreckage of their enormous accident and engage in further theatrics in the gravel trap.

There was much for the various partisan fanbases to cheer and jeer, but for the neutral there was surely no better moment than Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton going wheel-to-wheel once again for the lead, this time clashing. The pair's first-lap Tamburello coming-together was a critical moment in the race, and just possibly the 2021 title fight too. It made it two races in succession where they have engaged in a direct battle for the lead, but this time there was a different outcome.

In Bahrain, Verstappen's minor mistake cost him dearly. At Imola, the error came from Hamilton. But the world champion's slip-up actually came, quite literally, before the pair arrived side-by-side into the track's first real braking zone, after he'd made "just that bit of a mistake" in his start launch process and struggled to match the acceleration of the surging Red Bulls behind.

Hamilton's lack of momentum gave Verstappen the chance to

"Hamilton has seen exactly how Verstappen will take the fight right up to and against the limit"

get alongside and stopped the Mercedes driver from shutting the door on the run to Tamburello. To make amends, Hamilton braked later into the chicane to get his nose back in front as they turned in. But after ceding the inside line, Hamilton had left himself open to exactly what happened next, no matter how gamely he hung on.

Verstappen felt he had to go a bit wider than he wanted, his words perhaps covering accusations that he'd forced Hamilton off, which in any case is an argument that doesn't stack up because of the timing of the incident – the first real corner of the first lap – and the specific circumstances (cold tyres, wet track). By clinging on around the outside, Hamilton left himself exposed to going over the kerbs, with a clash inevitable. It was a racing incident and a thrilling one at that.

The Mercedes was slightly damaged, and the rest of the car

was jolted over the brutal kerbs. Verstappen was clear in the lead, apparently unaware there had even been contact, replying "I don't think we touched" when asked for his perspective on the incident. Hamilton had to check up and pick up speed again, his eventually futile chase to retake the lead just beginning.

Hamilton did report that Verstappen had "pushed me right wide in Turn 1" over his radio, but there were to be no public histrionics, no sense of bad blood from either camp after the race. The body language between the pair in the press conference afterwards was essentially the same as it generally has been in recent years – respectful yet unyielding; jovial but with an underlying edge.

After making contact in that fight for the lead, both now know where the line is and what the other is prepared to do. Hamilton has seen exactly how Verstappen will take the fight right up to and against the limit, while the young pretender knows the veteran world champion isn't going to give up under any circumstances.

Consider Hamilton's "I've still got it" radio message as he returned to the pits after winning in Bahrain. Perhaps it was loaded with the uncertainty that Hamilton has admitted to feeling about how long he can keep performing at F1's highest level. Perhaps that sense had been exacerbated over the off-season given Bahrain represented his first win since contracting COVID-19, then missing his first race after an unbroken, 265-event run, before making a subdued return to close out 2020. Perhaps it was in fact a recognition that Hamilton needed to give himself – affirming that he could take on a young star and prevail, in a slower package as well.

Every way you look at it, the Hamilton versus Verstappen battle is loaded with significance for either party (and how disappointing it is that Leclerc is reduced to brilliant cameos in the background). Bahrain was too small a data set to be totally sure that Mercedes and Red Bull would be in a close title fight in 2021, although getting overexcited at what that result suggested was understandable. But the Imola weekend continued the early pattern.

Red Bull has the faster car and should have been 1-2 on the grid. But it seems that it still has work to do to be entirely sure it can outlast Mercedes over a race distance, given Verstappen's struggles towards the end of the stint on intermediate tyres and the feeling that the Black Arrows' tyre warm-up deficit across the Imola weekend meant it would be paid back with better tyre life as the race stints wore on.

If that is to be the full pattern for the season, then F1 fans should be rightly excited at the prospect of further wheel-to-wheel battles to come between two of the championship's heavyweights – more so now that they've seen exactly what they're prepared to do. ■

P18 EMILIA ROMAGNA GP REPORT

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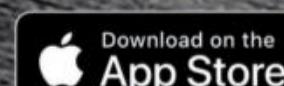
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Football's lesson from racing

The football-themed Superleague Formula series of 2008-11 was everything that the proposed ESL will not be

JAMES NEWBOLD

In the world of football, plans announced last Sunday for the creation of a new European Super League have rightly sparked outrage and condemnation. Despite proclamations from Real Madrid president Florentino Perez that the move is to 'save football', the ESL's creation amounts to little more than a cynical money grab by the billionaire owners of the 12 founding clubs, attempting to shut out competition and pool lucrative TV deals between them. To hell with the consequences.

Motorsport is hardly a paragon of virtue when it comes to talks of damaging breakaways. Formula 1 came to the brink in 1981, and again in 2009 at the British Grand Prix, which marked the peak of the row over the FIA's mooted £30million cost cap for 2010. Prior to that, in 1961 there had been the Intercontinental Formula for cars up to three-litre capacity launched in protest at F1's new 1.5-litre rulebook. None had a lasting impact.

The idea of a Super League isn't new to our orbit either. But unlike the ESL, the Superleague Formula single-seater championship that had a short run between 2008 and 2011 was a good thing for motorsport that added to, rather than detracted from, the landscape. A curious blend of football and motorsport, with identical V12-powered cars daubed in the liveries of clubs, Superleague was the brainchild of Robin Webb.

ESL founding clubs Liverpool, AC Milan and Spurs were key

"Everyone says it's the most fantastic thing they've ever been involved in and I would agree"

players, but so too were relative minnows Beijing Guoan and Anderlecht, champions of 2008 and 2010 respectively, either side of Liverpool's 2009 triumph. PSV Eindhoven finished runner-up in 2008 and Basel twice placed third. Performance was totally unrelated to the clout of the clubs, but rather down to the competency (or lack thereof) of the teams running their operations – they included ex-F1 operation Zakspeed, crack Formula 3 squad Alan Docking Racing and the David Hayle-run Hitech Junior Team – and the ability of drivers to navigate its fully reversed grid for race two without getting embroiled in incidents.

From 2009, the best performing teams each weekend were added into a five-lap super final money race (€100,000 at stake for the winner), which in 2010 also earned points. It was a lottery where *anything* could happen – if you don't believe me, have a

watch of the 2010 Ordos super final – as all sport should be. In short, it was nothing like the vaunted Super League of today.

By the time Webb's vision had taken tangible (and noisy) form in 2008, it still wasn't without its problems. It was originally intended that clubs would get a slice of revenue through TV rights, sponsorship and licensing agreements but, perhaps unsurprisingly, technical director Steve Farrell says the idea became "a legal nightmare".

"There was a lot of subsidy from Superleague, so it never really got to the model that you'd say was commercially viable," he says.

"The clubs thing wasn't working for the organisers," agrees Docking. "They were hoping initially that there would be sponsorship coming to the racing programme via clubs, and it really didn't happen – the sponsors of those clubs weren't really interested in motorsport."

The collapse of the A1GP 'World Cup of Motorsport' in 2009 appeared to provide a solution that resulted in a mish-mash of nations and clubs competing together in the two Superleague events that were held in 2011 prior to the series' demise.

"We thought we'd convert the thing that wasn't really working on football clubs to countries," Farrell continues. "The beauty of that is you don't have to ask a country if you can put 'England' on the side of a car... It just made life easier and the business model started to work. It very nearly got pushed over the top of the hill and was going to roll down the other side, but it just fell at the last hurdle on a couple of silly things."

"If they had started out that way, I think they would have travelled further with it," adds Docking.

But regardless of its flawed premise and ultimate failure, Superleague had much to be proud of. A true melting pot catering for drivers both ascending and descending the career ladder, it served up a superb racing spectacle and provided moments of heart-stopping drama – see Davide Rigo bump-starting his spun Anderlecht car in reverse to keep his title hopes alive at Navarra in 2010. And its willingness to try new things made it a joy for its participants to work in.

"Everyone says it's the most fantastic thing they've ever been involved in and I would completely agree," Farrell says. "You had the freedom to ignore everything that normally limits you in motor racing and say, 'This is how to make a really interesting race series.' We could sit around and dream up an idea, like the super final, the whole weekend structure. It was just sensational."

The ESL's boardroom wreckers intent on creating a series of glorified friendlies could learn a thing or two from Superleague Formula. Even if nobody asked for it, Superleague didn't make boasts about being something it wasn't. It attempted to learn from mistakes and evolve. And it didn't try to scorch the earth... ■

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YOUR SAY

To witness Rindt deliver against two Formula 1 world champions and a gridful of more experienced drivers was very special

IAN TITCHMARSH

Formula 1 in Formula 2

Having been present at several of the races covered in Brian Harvey's article about Formula 1 drivers racing in Formula 2 (8 April), could I respectfully draw attention to one serious omission and one which is at the wrong end of the top 10.

Whether judged on the basis of Crystal Palace alone or in combination with Mallory Park the previous day, Jochen Rindt's performance was nothing short of sensational. You had to have seen him in Formula Junior the previous year to suspect that he was a rare talent, but to witness him deliver against two F1 world champions and a gridful of more experienced drivers in 1964 was very special.

The omitted race is the 1960 Kentish 100 at Brands Hatch which Jimmy Clark (#48, right) won by less than half a second from Dan Gurney, both in Lotus Type 18s. Jimmy was in his first season of single-seater racing and this was his first single-seater victory outside Formula Junior. The opposition included Porsche 718s for Stirling Moss, Graham Hill and Jo Bonnier, his Team Lotus team-mates Innes Ireland and John Surtees, and other F1 drivers such as Roy Salvadori, Olivier Gendebien, Masten Gregory and Ron Flockhart.

Judged at the time, rather than on the basis of what the drivers achieved subsequently, I believe that these two races absolutely epitomise the fundamental point of your article and they should take the top two positions, Jochen ahead of Jimmy!

Ian Titchmarsh

By email

Great race, but here's what's wrong...

It was fantastic to watch the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix with so much tension and unpredictability. However, it highlighted two major problems for me. First, is it possible to hold a race without a major clash on the first lap bringing out a safety car? What is wrong with the best drivers in the world that they are unable to show a bit of patience and elevate their position by stealth and planning rather than throwing the kitchen sink at the first few corners.

Second, it seems to me ludicrous that the red flag created a restarted race with all drivers on the same lap despite half the race



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having been run. For all his brilliance and savvy, Hamilton made a rare mistake and dropped his car. He was down a lap but the red flag entitled him to start on the same lap as the leaders. With a faster car he was able to pick off the Ferraris and McLarens to take second. It seems deeply unfair that Messrs Ricciardo, Sainz, Leclerc and Norris had managed to stay on track but were displaced by a Hamilton who on this occasion did not deserve to come second.

Chris Willows

Lymington

Has safety taken a step back?

I have been an avid reader for many years, and have seen many changes in Formula 1. In your Engineering supplement (18 March) I noticed a story on the FIA report into Romain Grosjean's 2020 Bahrain accident. The point I wanted to make is about the gloves used in F1 – with so much tech on the steering wheels in modern F1 cars, is there a sacrifice on safety in order to be able to use these controls? After all, the burns sustained were on Grosjean's hands.

As a motorcyclist, I've seen a deterioration in gloves in order to facilitate touch-screen compatibility. I was surprised the fireproof properties of gloves was not mentioned.

James A Kelly

Castlewellan, County Down

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VERSTAPPEN EVENS THE SCORE IN IMOLA THRILLER

The Lewis Hamilton-Max Verstappen battle continued in Italy, and this time it was the Red Bull star who came out on top in tricky conditions

ALEX KALINAUKAS

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The 2021 Emilia Romagna Grand Prix stage was set for a chess match – tense, slow-burning, unlively. The race's final bow was a result that came via a war-zone scene – dramatic, thrilling, controversial.

The teams had been aware of possible Sunday rain showers but, as ever in Formula 1, this particular crowd-pleaser wasn't guaranteed. Yet the rain did arrive, 45 minutes before the start, and it fell in such a manner around the elongated Imola layout that it created an interesting challenge, with the lap's first half soaking and the rest slippery-to-dry.

And it was this pre-race precipitation that created the thriller, one that had five distinct phases, and the make-up of the event's final act – Max Verstappen triumphant on the podium ahead of polesitter Lewis Hamilton – was ultimately decided by three critical saves.

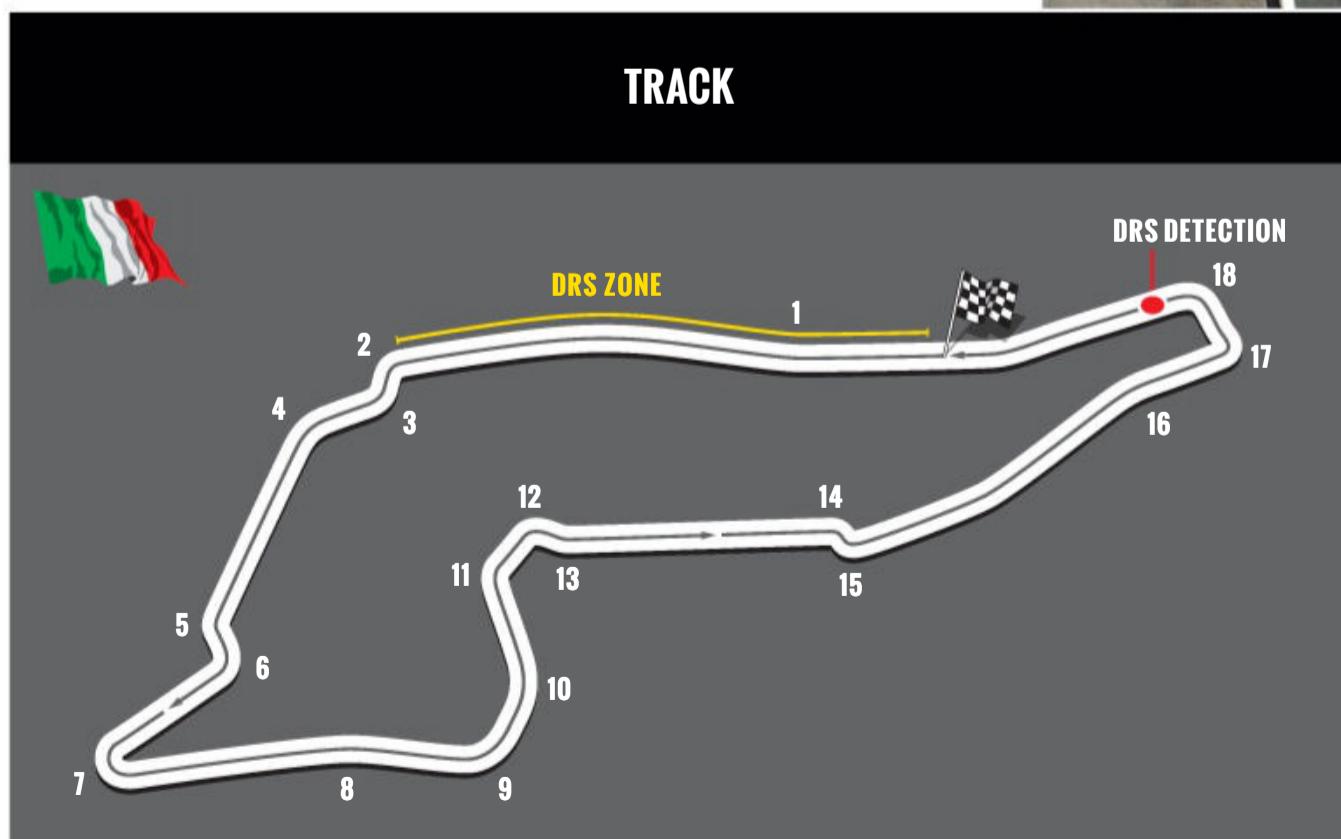
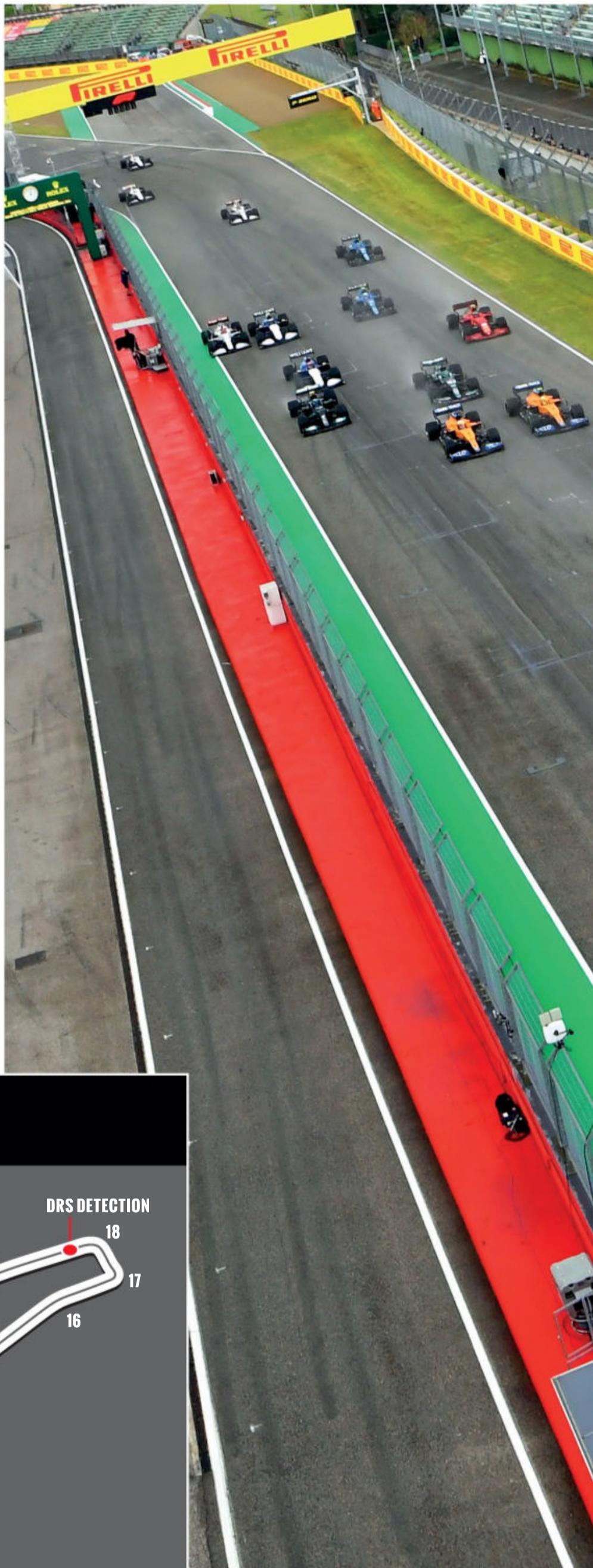
PHASE 1 – CONTACT AT THE START

The field had had time to sample the conditions ahead of the race with their practice start laps to the grid. It was clearly treacherous, helpfully proved by Fernando Alonso breaking his Alpine's front wing against the Tosa wall when he slid off on intermediate tyres. And it was on that green-walled rubber that most drivers started the race.

When the lights went out, there was a clear winner. Verstappen hadn't quite known what to expect when it came to launching in slippery conditions since, as he said, Red Bull "always struggled in the wet" in 2020. But the result of the team's off-season work to improve this was a stunning launch that quickly drew him alongside team-mate Sergio Perez. Then Verstappen was moving left, after initially going right, such was his momentum. Hamilton's pole advantage immediately disappeared as he was slower away than the Red Bulls owing to a "bit of a mistake" – too much wheelspin for the Mercedes in the second launch phase.

Verstappen, briefly nearly on the grass, nosed ahead as the duo reached the really wet part of the track on the approach to the Tamburello chicane. He had the inside line, but Hamilton just wasn't giving up, braking later initially and then carrying greater speed to stay alongside his rival at the sequence's first apex. Verstappen wasn't conceding either, holding the racing line through the turn and edging his rival out wide.

There was contact, light enough that Verstappen claimed not to have noticed at the time, but enough to force Hamilton clattering over the kerbs at Tamburello's second apex, damaging his left-side front- ➤





ANDRE



wing endplate. Tough, but fair. Neither driver complained – it wasn't this clash involving a Mercedes driver at Tamburello that ignited with searing, scotch-bonnet spice.

"We went into Turn 2, side by side, but it's difficult to expect the grip on the first lap," said Verstappen. "I also ended up a bit wider than I wanted and then Lewis was also there..."

"...I didn't get a good start," picked up Hamilton. "Max got a better start than me and then I think I was slightly ahead going into Turn 2, but I was basically avoiding us coming together. Max was just coming across. We had that touch and I had to use the exit."

The result of taking to the kerbs meant Hamilton had to gather his car exiting Tamburello. He just held off Perez, who was soon to lose third to Charles Leclerc by sliding off coming out of Variante Alta, to maintain second. But Verstappen was gone, 4s clear by the time the race's first safety car was called just as he started lap two.

PHASE 2 – THE INTERMEDIATES AGE

The race was suspended because Nicholas Latifi had gone off at Acque Minerali, the same spot where Leclerc had been lucky that his race had not been doomed before the start as he dropped his Ferrari in a similar manner on the formation lap. But whereas Leclerc was able to scamper away unscathed, and retake his position ahead of the grid reforming, Latifi came back onto the track and moved into the path of Nikita Mazepin's oncoming Haas, spearing off right into the wall when they collided.

The resulting wreckage needed cleaning up, but the safety car period was extended due to an incident involving the other Haas. For the second race in a row, Mick Schumacher dropped his VF-21 all by himself – this time while warming his full-wet tyres in the safety car snake – and consequently wiped his front wing off against the pitlane exit wall.

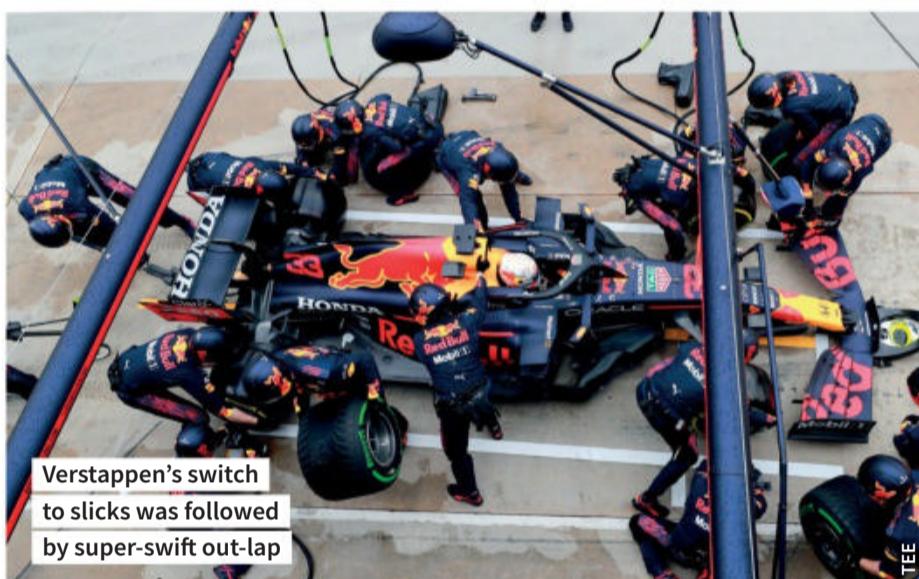
Clearing all the debris meant the race got going again on lap seven of 63, with Verstappen just having enough Honda grunt to stay ahead of Hamilton's restart charge – again on the outside of the Tamburello approach. The two leaders, plus Leclerc, immediately dropped Perez,

but Hamilton then had to catch a wild slide going through Acque Minerali that helped Verstappen complete the lap with a 3.3s lead.

The Red Bull driver maintained that advantage throughout the ensuing 20 laps, extending it through the ebbs and flows on the drying track versus Hamilton to a maximum of 6.1s before the world champion started coming back at him. Mercedes suspected that Red Bull had better tyre warm-up in the early laps – this was a problem that particularly impacted Valtteri Bottas, who had started eighth, in the pack – but there was an additional factor impacting Hamilton's pace in the early stages.

The Tamburello clash had damaged the footplate on the left edge of his front wing's endplate, but the louvred aero part did not completely come off in the incident. It was left "flopping around" according to Mercedes director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin, as it was "held on by some pressure tappings, and that was causing a lot of very inconsistent flow further down the car". Shovlin reckoned the resulting impact this had on the airflow to the rear of Hamilton's car was costing him around half a second per lap, until the footplate eventually came off. After that, the team believed the loss was only worth two to three tenths, and Hamilton certainly recovered





considerable ground as this phase of the race drew to a close.

On laps 23 to 25, Hamilton halved Verstappen's lead from its maximum, then brought it down to two seconds on the next tour. The Red Bull's inters "were finished", according to the leader, "so to keep on going was difficult, a lot of sliding around". Verstappen also had to deal with the first pack of non-Haases to be lapped, all while he and his team were negotiating when to make the switch to slicks, which Sebastian Vettel had become the first runner to do on lap 20.

After being undercut in Bahrain, this time Red Bull went aggressive. The team called Verstappen in at the end of lap 27, while Mercedes gave Hamilton one tour to try to make a difference as the race's next phase abruptly began.

PHASE 3 – THE SLICK CHANGES

Red Bull turned Verstappen around in 2.2s and he produced a 1m51.2s out-lap – two seconds faster than Hamilton would soon manage. And there was no hope of Hamilton – now also on the medium slicks – briefly leapfrogging Verstappen anyway, as his right-front had come off slowly, costing him 1.8s extra and neutering his rapid in-lap.

And so began the chapter that, more than any other, shaped the final result, as Hamilton's resumed chase of Verstappen lasted only until he made his first major in-race error since failing to notice the closed pitlane during the 2020 Italian GP.

On lap 31, Verstappen had just lapped Bottas, who was struggling even more with tyre warm-up after switching to the mediums two tours earlier. As the leader roared clear of a five-car train of traffic, Hamilton was getting stuck into the backmarkers behind his teammate – Lance Stroll, George Russell, running 10th after making solid progress in the race's opening phases, Schumacher (now two laps down) and Kimi Raikkonen.

Hamilton passed the Alfa on the pit straight, and the Haas exiting Tamburello, before Russell stayed right and gave him a fractionally tighter approach for the Tosa hairpin. Hamilton went onto the damp and, after getting ahead of the Williams, had to catch an oversteer snap as he got back onto the racing line that sent him further right and ➤



The tone of exchanges between Lewis Hamilton and Peter Bonnington after the Mercedes driver had crossed the line on his final Q3 run made it seem as though it was the first pole position for the driver/race engineer combination. Not their 73rd together, and not the 99th of Hamilton's Formula 1 career.

Their charming bewilderment at taking pole can be explained by three things. First, the Mercedes pair led the pack around the final Q3 runs, while the Red Bulls brought up the rear, which left Hamilton in the dark for three quarters of his cooldown tour. Then there's the sense that Mercedes is just delighted to beat Red Bull's faster package in any circumstances so far in 2021, plus the fact that Sergio Perez and, in particular, Max Verstappen threw away pole.

Imola 2020 polesitter Valtteri Bottas had led the way for Mercedes in Friday practice, and topped Q1 before fading badly to eighth in Q3 because he "couldn't trust the rear end of the car" due to a sudden tyre warm-up difficulty. But Hamilton grabbed provisional pole with a 1m14.411s. It wasn't the "perfect-perfect" lap he felt he needed to beat the Red Bulls, as he'd "lost a little bit" catching an oversteer snap at Acque Minerali, but it was a start.

On Hamilton's second attempt, "unfortunately I came out of Turn 2 and 3 [Tamburello] a tenth down and by the time I got to Turn 9 [Piratella] I was a tenth and a half down, but managed to regain that through the middle and last sector". It wasn't quite enough, as Hamilton's second effort was 0.022s behind what would be the pole time.

Hamilton was still overjoyed because he'd done just enough to seal pole, whereas Perez and Verstappen did just enough to lose it. Perez, who trailed Verstappen after the first Q3 runs, "did a mistake on my final corner" – a tiny slip that just appeared to cost him critical momentum, the 0.035s gap to Hamilton, on the run to the line. Verstappen's final Q3 effort was hampered early when he put two wheels on the grass exiting Tamburello. If the top three had produced their best sectors when it counted, the Dutchman would have been on pole by 0.016s.

Behind the top three came Charles Leclerc and Pierre Gasly, the duo again impressing against the clock but needing a slice of fortune to start so high, which Lando Norris provided. The McLaren driver's 1m14.454s final Q3 lap would have put him third, but the time was deleted because Norris had run fractionally too wide at the hotly policed Piratella exit kerb, and he fell to seventh behind team-mate Daniel Ricciardo.

"HAMILTON DID JUST ENOUGH TO SEAL POLE. PEREZ AND VERSTAPPEN DID JUST ENOUGH TO LOSE IT"



SUTTON



COATES



onto the still-wet part of the track. He slid irresistibly into the gravel, and his attempt at saving the situation went disastrously wrong.

Hamilton didn't have the space or steering lock to pull off an initial throttle-blast manoeuvre to his left, not helped by the gravel, and as a result he smacked his front wing against the Tosa wall. Then he was stuck.

"It just wouldn't go into reverse," Hamilton later explained. "I was holding the reverse button and it took forever to engage. I didn't think it was going to work. I then tried to kind of do a burnout spin to get going again and I was back in the barrier. So, then it took a long time again to get back in reverse, and when I was reversing, I was like, 'I've just got to keep going backwards and work my way out in reverse'. If I hadn't done that I would probably still have been there now."

Engineer Peter Bonnington was warning Hamilton of all the approaching traffic, which satisfied race director Michael Masi that his escape was done safely. In any case, Masi soon had a bigger incident with which to be concerned.

As Hamilton limped back to the pits for a front wing change – the time spent in the gravel and the extra stop meant he went a lap down against Verstappen – his team-mate and Russell were adding major spice to a storyline concerning both their F1 futures.

After Hamilton had slid across his bows, Russell had continued to chase Bottas, enjoying the benefit of two extra laps warming up the mediums and closing in rapidly as a result. With DRS now activated, Russell gained even more speed against the driver he hopes to replace as they ran down the pit straight at the start of lap 32 (their 31st). The Williams drew alongside on the approach to Tamburello, but "hit an especially damp patch and the car snap yawed, bearing in mind that the car had low downforce in the rear with the DRS open", according to the wording of the inevitable stewards' report.

It appeared as if Bottas had squeezed his rival, something Russell maintained, but it was concluded that "at no time did either car manoeuvre erratically", and despite the severity of the impact – the flying cars struck the barriers on the inside and outside of Tamburello – it was judged a racing incident. Such was the spread of damage across the track that the red flags were waved.

PHASE 4 – THE SHORTEST SAVE

After the pack had returned to the pits, it took just over 25 minutes for the circuit to be cleared. When the drivers were released again, the lapped runners were allowed to overtake and form up again ahead of the second start. This was to be a rolling version, as Masi had determined that "the far-left-hand side [of the grid was] quite damp", and so used his discretion to avoid a second standing start.

Verstappen of course headed the queue, with Hamilton lining up ninth, but just a few seconds behind the leader thanks to the unlapping allowance. Now the race's second major save occurred.

Ahead of the lap 35 restart, Verstappen backed up Leclerc and Lando Norris. The McLaren driver had risen to third after being allowed past team-mate Daniel Ricciardo in the early stages, then gained from Perez being handed a 10s time addition for overtaking Ricciardo and Pierre Gasly under the Latifi/Schumacher safety car, illegally repassing the pair after he'd briefly slid off at Piratella. The Mexican served the time at his stop for slicks, where he also took on a new steering wheel as it had been "moving the differential" throughout the first stint "on its own" due to an electrical issue, and so he was fourth at the restart.





Verstappen had it all under control – until he didn’t. He later joked that “some secret tyre warming” was going on, but he suddenly slid to the inside of the first Rivazza left, the RB16B’s rear wildly coming around before Verstappen could catch it. He was sent stumbling over the kerbs, all four wheels on the grass. Leclerc momentarily considered overtaking, but opted not to – and in any case, if the Ferrari had got ahead, Verstappen would have been allowed to repass before the first safety car line, since this lap was essentially considered a new formation lap and the overtaking-under-safety-car rules were therefore interpreted differently.

Leclerc’s actual mistake here came just seconds later, as he failed to keep up with Verstappen’s eventual jump back to racing speed, his lead saved in a heartbeat. “Just before the actual restart he had a small snap,” Leclerc, minus radio communication after the red flag, explained. “I expected him just after the small snap to wait before he [went] again, but he actually went just after a small snap and I got surprised there.”

PHASE 5 – HAMILTON’S RECOVERY SAVE

Norris capitalised on Leclerc’s error to seize second, helped by his softs firing up faster than the mediums on the Ferrari, which the team picked for the restart as it was wary of the softs graining late on. But Verstappen simply checked out. He gained 0.77s per lap over his pursuers for the first 25 tours that followed the restart, and won by 22s.

Behind, Hamilton had gained a spot thanks to Raikkonen dropping his Alfa on the unlapping tour, but he was actually passed into Tamburello at the restart by the opportunistic Yuki Tsunoda. The AlphaTauri driver’s joy was fleeting as he spun across Hamilton’s bows between the chicane’s apexes and dropped to 15th.

From there, Hamilton came alive in his fully repaired car. “It was really encouraging, to see what Lewis could do,” reflected Shovlin, who maintained Mercedes is “still walking away saying we’re not good enough” versus Red Bull. Hamilton moved up to seventh when Perez spun off chasing Leclerc through the Villeneuve chicane on lap 38, then chased down and passed Stroll and

Ricciardo on laps 39 and 42, using DRS each time to blast alongside on the outside approach to Tamburello.

He took eight more laps before doing likewise to Carlos Sainz Jr’s Ferrari to take fourth, then engaged in a thrilling chase with Leclerc and Norris in the closing stages. When Leclerc lost the DRS gap to Norris at the start of lap 55, Hamilton pounced to bounce the Ferrari from a shock home podium.

Norris then looked to be doing just enough to resist Hamilton, positioning his McLaren perfectly into Tamburello each time, despite vibrations stemming from his kneepad hitting his clutch paddle. But on lap 60, Hamilton finally had enough momentum to pull alongside and recover the place he had thrown away 29 tours earlier. The Briton gained so much time with DRS on that lap that he used it to set the race’s fastest lap by 0.8s over Verstappen’s solo effort up front.

THE AFTERMATH

In the end, both Verstappen and Hamilton had cause to be mightily relieved and very pleased with their Imola efforts. If the 2021 season is to be the thriller F1 hopes it will, then last Sunday made it 2/2 for the championship’s leading drivers going wheel-to-wheel.

This time, Verstappen nailed his main chance to beat Hamilton, but both drivers made errors in the tough conditions, Hamilton’s simply far larger. But it would only have taken one of their respective mistakes going ever so slightly differently for the tale of the 2021 Emilia Romagna GP to have ended in another way.

It was, though, a story of three saves, from two heroes. Drama throughout, that left the audience very much wanting more. ■

NEXT F1 REPORT

PORTUGUESE GRAND PRIX 6 MAY ISSUE

With Hamilton and Verstappen on a win apiece, who’ll seize the advantage at the Algarve International Circuit?

Aston Martin's struggles continue

Aston Martin had a fraught race at Imola as it fought fires literally and metaphorically.

Both cars were in hot bother with the stewards during and after the race, and on the way to the grid Sebastian Vettel and Lance Stroll suffered brake overheating issues.

The Aston mechanics had to enact hurried repairs in their starting slots. Stroll's brakes were fixed in time for the race start, but Vettel had to be wheeled off for a pitlane start as his repairs took longer. This meant his mechanics had not fitted all his tyres by five minutes before the start, and he therefore copped a stop/go penalty.

At the time the penalty was issued, one third into the race, Vettel had just become something of a slicks guinea pig by becoming the first driver to have medium Pirellis bolted on amid the damp conditions. But his penalty ensured he could only remain above the Haas pair before the red flag. Vettel then shuffled up a few places, but a gearbox issue forced the German to stop early.

Stroll put the grid issues behind him and battled hard among the lower reaches of the points, finishing within a second of Daniel Ricciardo despite also suffering gearbox woes. But the Canadian then picked up a post-race penalty for passing Pierre Gasly off the road at Tamburello in the early laps, which dropped him to eighth.



Bottas and Russell in war of words after huge crash

George Russell and Valtteri Bottas engaged in a war of words – and theatrical hand gestures – after their enormous accident halfway through the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix.

The stewards called it a racing incident, stating “at no time did either car manoeuvre erratically”, with Russell unfortunate to “hit an especially damp patch” as he came alongside the Mercedes as the track bends left before the Tamburello braking zone.

Mercedes junior Russell accosted Bottas – still in his ruined cockpit – who later claimed “I couldn’t hear what he was saying”.

Bottas’s view was that he was “obviously defending my position”. He added: “I knew in that place, it’s quite tricky to overtake, so tried to make sure that I don’t make space for him, but also sure that I leave at least one car’s width of space by the regulations. He went for it and lost it and hit me, and it was game over.”

Russell gave a fiery TV interview soon after the shunt, saying he was “very pissed off and

frustrated with [Bottas] at the time” when he ran through the gravel. “I’m fighting for P9,” he continued, “a P9 for him is absolutely nothing. Almost meaningless. He did a move that you would do if you were fighting for victory on the last lap of the race. It begs the question, ‘Why he would do that for P9?’? Perhaps if it was another driver, he wouldn’t have. So that’s what went through my mind.”

When that was put to Bottas, he joked: “Sorry, I lost my aluminium foil hat somewhere. It’s quite a theory.”

Upon reflection, Russell, who hopes a call with Bottas will bring closure, said the crash was “a very unfortunate incident. I think it could’ve been avoided. Valtteri was defending hard and he was in his right to do so. But in these conditions with one dry line it only had one outcome and that was unfortunate. So, his move was within the rules, but there should have been a bit more respect for the speed and the conditions in my opinion.”

“A ROLLERCOASTER OF A DAY”

Pierre Gasly after starting fifth on the wrong wet tyres, tumbling down to 18th and recovering to take four points in eighth



Raikkonen's weird penalty

Kimi Raikkonen lost his fine ninth place to a bizarre penalty that even the Imola event stewards didn't seem happy with.

The Finn had clumsily spun at Tamburello on the lap out of the pits for the final restart. As this is considered another formation lap "the way the regulations are worded" (said race director Michael Masi), he could have regained the two places by the first safety car line.

Alfa Romeo initially instructed him to do that, then called him off when the safety car

lights went out because it didn't want to "create a safety issue in the wet conditions", said the stewards' report. A call to Masi couldn't be answered because the restart was unfolding.

Because Raikkonen didn't then pit and allow all cars to pass, which is the rule if you spin and then don't retake your position by the first safety car line, the stewards considered that they had no alternative other than to dish out a 30-second post-race time addition "for reasons of consistency".



Drama for Perez after outqualifying Verstappen

Sergio Perez earned praise for claiming his first Formula 1 front-row start, but suffered a tricky race last Sunday.

Perez had a nibble at polesitter Lewis Hamilton off the line, before the pair were rapidly usurped by Max Verstappen. Perez also gifted a spot to Charles Leclerc's Ferrari on the opening lap before the race was briefly neutralised by Nicholas Latifi's crash, and then endured a further setback when he slid wide at Piratella to lose places to Daniel Ricciardo and Pierre Gasly under the safety car.

Perez elected to repass them, thereby earning a 10-second penalty while running well adrift of Leclerc in the damp laps. That meant he lost fourth to Lando Norris following the round of pitstops when the field felt brave enough to take on slicks. He lined up fourth for the restart thanks to Hamilton's earlier Tosa gaffe, but then slid off at the Villeneuve chicane on lap 38, falling down the order and out of the points.

This lifted Carlos Sainz Jr to fourth and Daniel Ricciardo to fifth. Sainz was able to track Leclerc, as Hamilton recovered past both, and followed his Ferrari team-mate home just a second and a half behind. But Ricciardo struggled with graining on his soft tyres and fell back, leaving him to fend off a train of Lance Stroll, Pierre Gasly and Kimi Raikkonen to claim sixth place.

Q & A

FERNANDO ALONSO ALPINE DRIVER



Do you agree that drivers with new teams struggled more this weekend?

I'd tend to agree. It looks like that, and it feels kind of obvious that every lap we do, these drivers, we feel more comfortable. Feeling-wise, from lap one to 63, I felt 300% better in a way of how confident I am with the car. But this cannot be an excuse to say that we did not perform well. I did not perform well – I have to be more prepared and more ready next time. It doesn't matter if you have little time or no time in the

car, I will try to be better next time.

Did you expect this steep learning curve?

I was expecting exactly what we are fighting now. I finished right behind Esteban [Ocon]; I was in front of him when I retired the car in Bahrain. He is performing very well and he finished on the podium last year in Bahrain. It was my second qualifying and it is my first race here because in Bahrain I only did 30 laps. I am where I expected to be, but you always want to be more and higher up. You want to be a little bit more confident in the car, and probably I was not confident in Bahrain or

confident here. I will not be confident in Portimao – this is not a feeling that goes from day to night and then you are 100 per cent. It will take time.

Did you miss these unpredictable races?

Normally you do like these races when you start at the back, because you do have more possibilities to come back. You have more opportunities to gamble on strategy – [take] a tyre that is perhaps a risk. So, for sure when you start at the back you like these races. But here we struggled to take these opportunities. But it was a fun race for sure and it was like a test day. Finally we were able to test in many different conditions.



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FERRARI AND WILLIAMS FOLLOW THE LEADERS

It took one round before the flock of Formula 1 teams found some convergence with the 2021 floor rules – which was inevitable, really. With less floor space afforded to the teams following the triangular cut-off ahead of the rear wheels, all eyes during testing were on the solutions at the Bahrain test and opening round of the season. That's exactly why Mercedes – and, by all accounts, Red Bull – decided not to show off their floors at their respective launches lest their competitors have their own versions in the windtunnel before the opening race.

Their decisions appear to have been vindicated because the design that the two teams had chanced upon, with a 'Z-shape'

profile, have now been adopted by both Ferrari and Williams. Although cutting more out of the floor sounds counterproductive, it actually offers the aerodynamicists an additional corner to play with, allowing them to tack winglets and strakes onto the top of it to help seal the floor. The more technologically involved description is that the corner will produce a tip vortex at this stage as it sheds off the floor, and, with clever management and direction of airflow using the tools on the top of the floor, this can create a buffer. This rolls along the edge of the rest of the floor and keeps the floor protected.

Ferrari's floor features a single fin on that corner, which is going to divert airflow outwards

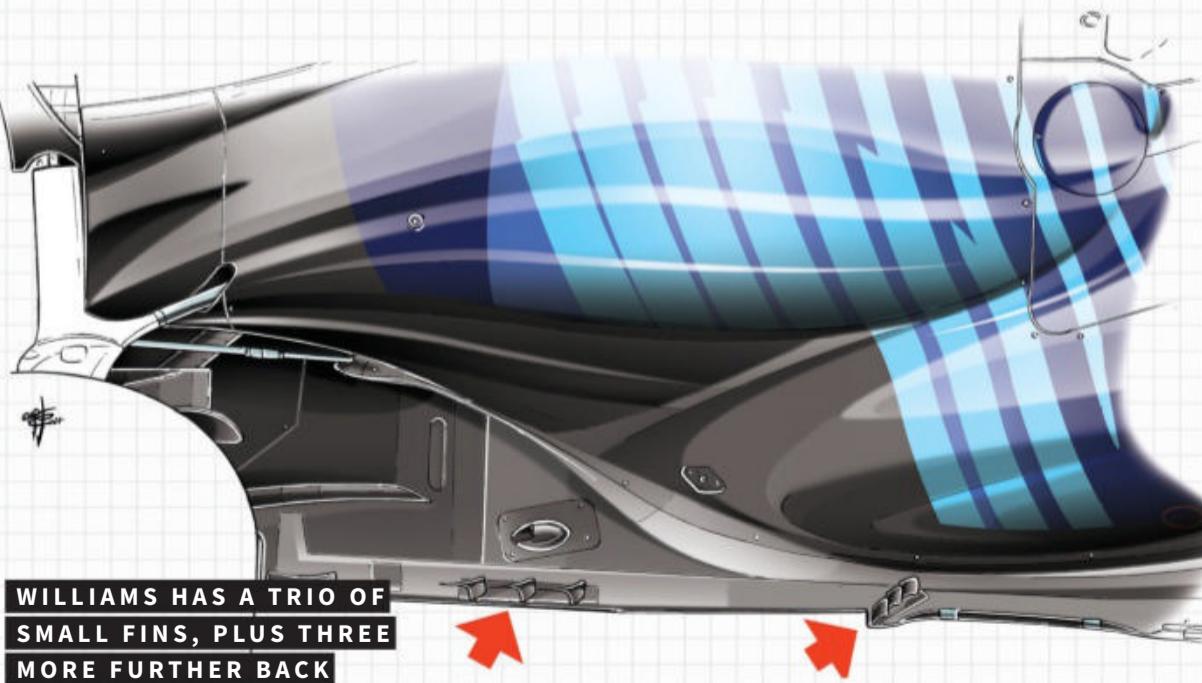
while it builds this sealing vortex, and will help ensure that the minimum of turbulence can drift underneath the car and peel off efficiency from the diffuser. Ferrari's collection of fins at the rear of the floor seems to be taking airflow that's drifting outwards, bringing it in slightly, perhaps to turn it along the edge of the diffuser to enhance that sealing effect.

Williams's new floor employs a trio of small fins on the edge of the added corner, again replicating the same effect, although using multiple smaller fins allows the airflow to be turned outwards without detaching within a shorter space of time. Behind that, there are three more fins with an extruded upper edge that also appear to take any airflow drifting outwards and direct it inwards to be worked by the final fin at the rear.

Ferrari and Williams appeared to be the two most-improved teams at Imola, with the Italian squad notching up another strong double points finish as Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz Jr collected fourth and fifth, despite a shaky start to the race. The two had a couple of off-piste moments but scooped up their cars and continued to show Ferrari's improved 2021 form. Williams, meanwhile, looked strong throughout practice and was well ahead of main rivals Haas and Alfa Romeo in qualifying, but shunts for Nicholas Latifi and George Russell ended hopes of a points-scoring afternoon.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

WILLIAMS HAS A TRIO OF
SMALL FINS, PLUS THREE
MORE FURTHER BACK



RACE CENTRE EMILIA ROMAGNA GP

20 Tsunoda #22 no Q1 time		18 Schumacher #47 1m16.279s		16 Raikkonen #7 1m15.974s		14 Latifi #6 1m15.593s		12 Russell #63 1m15.261s	
19 Mazepin #9 1m16.797s		17 Giovinazzi #99 1m16.122s		15 Alonso #14 1m15.593s		13 Vettel #5 1m15.394s		11 Sainz #55 1m15.199s	

FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m16.564s
2	Hamilton	1m16.605s
3	Verstappen	1m16.622s
4	Leclerc	1m16.796s
5	Gasly	1m16.888s
6	Sainz	1m16.888s
7	Alonso	1m17.457s
8	Stroll	1m17.489s
9	Latifi	1m17.739s
10	Ricciardo	1m17.769s
11	Russell	1m17.866s
12	Raikkonen	1m17.883s
13	Norris	1m17.935s
14	Vettel	1m17.984s
15	Giovinazzi	1m18.058s
16	Perez	1m18.228s
17	Ocon	1m18.360s
18	Mazepin	1m18.823s
19	Schumacher	1m19.480s
20	Tsunoda	1m19.781s

WEATHER Sunny, air 10-13C track 16-25C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m15.551s
2	Hamilton	1m15.561s
3	Gasly	1m15.629s
4	Sainz	1m15.834s
5	Leclerc	1m16.371s
6	Perez	1m16.411s
7	Tsunoda	1m16.419s
8	Norris	1m16.485s
9	Giovinazzi	1m16.513s
10	Stroll	1m16.737s
11	Ocon	1m16.817s
12	Latifi	1m16.823s
13	Alonso	1m16.835s
14	Verstappen	1m16.999s
15	Vettel	1m17.092s
16	Russell	1m17.179s
17	Raikkonen	1m17.273s
18	Ricciardo	1m17.281s
19	Schumacher	1m17.350s
20	Mazepin	1m17.857s

WEATHER Sunny, air 14-15C track 21-30C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m14.958s
2	Norris	1m15.414s
3	Hamilton	1m15.515s
4	Perez	1m15.551s
5	Leclerc	1m15.738s
6	Gasly	1m15.890s
7	Sainz	1m15.908s
8	Bottas	1m15.908s
9	Alonso	1m16.186s
10	Ocon	1m16.228s
11	Tsunoda	1m16.230s
12	Stroll	1m16.245s
13	Ricciardo	1m16.253s
14	Vettel	1m16.389s
15	Russell	1m16.427s
16	Schumacher	1m16.448s
17	Latifi	1m16.537s
18	Giovinazzi	1m16.612s
19	Raikkonen	1m16.803s
20	Mazepin	1m17.398s

WEATHER Sunny, air 14-15C track 21-30C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Hamilton	44	1	1
2 Verstappen	43	1	1
3 Norris	27	3	7
4 Leclerc	20	4	4
5 Bottas	16	3	3
6 Sainz	14	5	8
7 Ricciardo	14	6	6
8 Perez	10	5	2
9 Gasly	6	7	5
10 Stroll	5	8	10
11 Tsunoda	2	9	13
12 Ocon	2	9	9
13 Alonso	1	10	9
14 Raikkonen	0	11	14
15 Giovinazzi	0	12	12
16 Russell	0	14	12
17 Vettel	0	15	13
18 Schumacher	0	16	18
19 Mazepin	0	17	19
20 Latifi	0	18	14

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Mercedes	60
2 Red Bull	53
3 McLaren	41
4 Ferrari	34
5 AlphaTauri	8
6 Aston Martin	5
7 Alpine	3
8 Alfa Romeo	0
9 Williams	0
10 Haas	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	2	0	Bottas
Perez	1	1	Verstappen
Ricciardo	2	0	Norris
Vettel	0	2	Stroll
Alonso	1	1	Ocon
Leclerc	2	0	Sainz
Gasly	2	0	Tsunoda
Raikkonen	1	1	Giovinazzi
Mazepin	0	2	Schumacher
Latifi	0	2	Russell

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS

Hamilton	1	Verstappen	1
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POLE POSITIONS

Hamilton	1
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Verstappen	1
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Bottas	1
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Hamilton	1
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Bottas	1
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RACE RESULTS ROUND 2/23 (63 LAPS – 192.04 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	2h02m34.598s	61	In, Mn, Mu	1	Hamilton	1m16.702s	-	60
2	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+22.000s	2	In, Mu, Mn	2	Verstappen	1m17.524s	+0.822s	60
3	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+23.702s		In, Mn, Su	3	Norris	1m18.259s	+1.557s	63
4	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+25.579s		In, Mn	4	Perez	1m18.334s	+1.632s	49
5	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	+27.036s		In, Mn	5	Tsunoda	1m18.353s	+1.651s	62
6	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+51.220s		In, Mn, Su	6	Leclerc	1m18.379s	+1.677s	60
7	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+52.818s		Wn, In, Mn	7	Sainz	1m18.490s	+1.788s	60
8	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+56.909s		In, Mn	8	Gasly	1m18.782s	+2.080s	59
9	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m05.704s		Wn, In, Mn, Su, Mu	9	Stroll	1m18.994s	+2.292s	52
10	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	+1m06.561s		In, Mn	10	Vettel	1m19.074s	+2.372s	59
11	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	+1m07.151s		In, Mn, Su	11	Schumacher	1m19.193s	+2.491s	58
12	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+1m13.184s		In, Mn, Sn	12	Ricciardo	1m19.341s	+2.639s	54
13	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m34.773s		In, Mn	13	Alonso	1m19.396s	+2.694s	62
14	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		In, Mn	14	Ocon	1m19.417s	+2.715s	62
15	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	61 laps-gearbox		In, In, Mn, Sn	15	Raikkonen	1m19.422s	+2.720s	62
16	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps		Wn, In, Su, Mn	16	Giovinazzi	1m19.470s	+2.768s	57
17	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps		Wn, In, Su, Mn	17	Mazepin	1m20.402s	+3.700s	55
R	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	30 laps-accident		In, Mn	18	Russell	1m26.543s	+9.841s	28
R	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	30 laps-accident		In, Mu	19	Bottas	1m28.485s	+11.783s	30
R	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	0 laps-accident		In	20	Latifi	no time	-	-

WEATHER Wet-dry, overcast and cool, air 10-14C track 14-31C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 94.00mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 143.17mph

TYRES



RACE BRIEFING

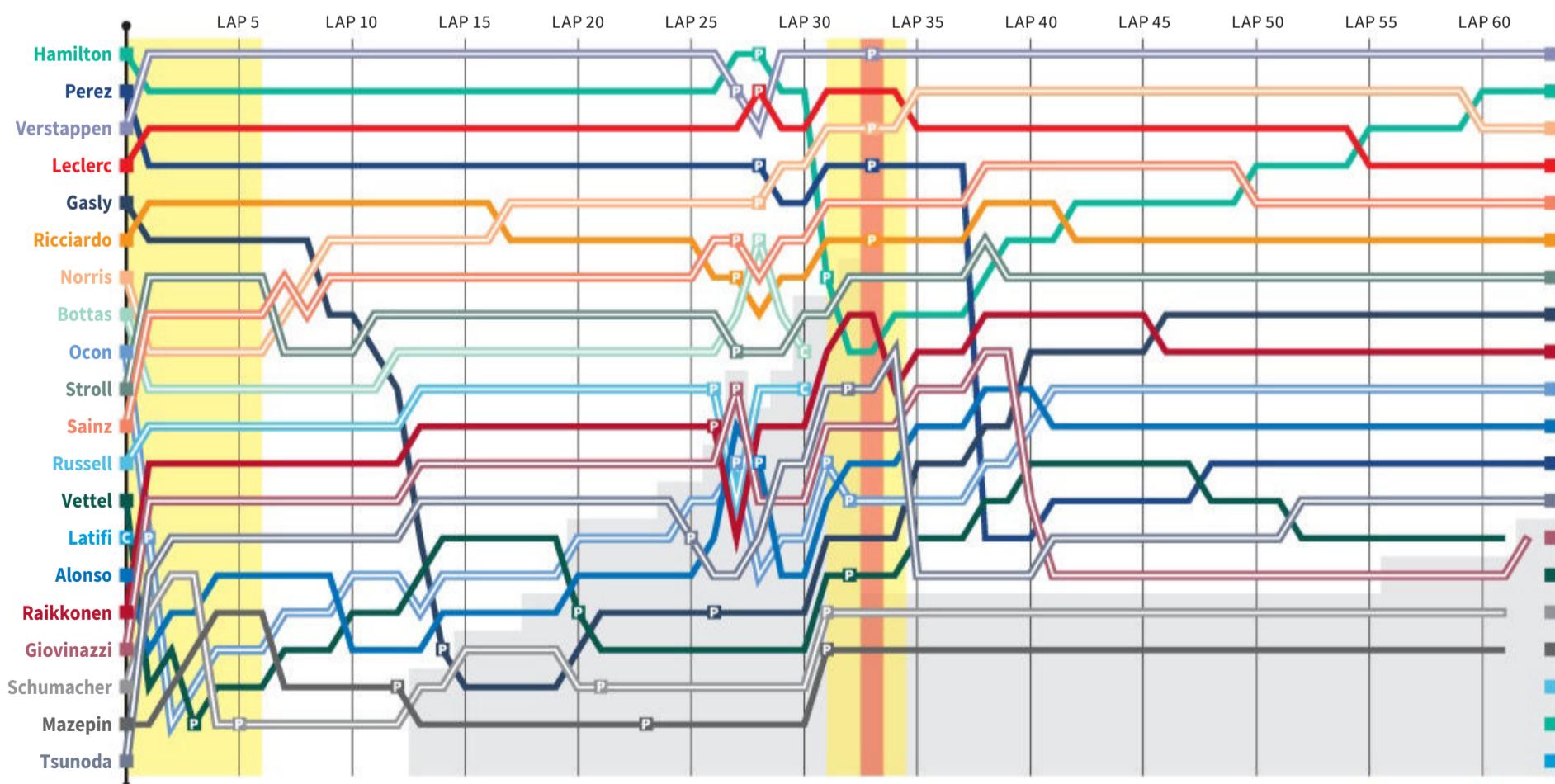
GRID PENALTIES

TSUNODA Five-place grid penalty for replacement gearbox, then required to start from back of the grid for additional power unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES

PEREZ 10-second penalty and two licence points for overtaking behind the safety car
TSUNODA 5s penalty and one licence point for leaving the track without a justifiable reason
multiple times
STROLL 5s penalty and one licence point for leaving the track and gaining an advantage
RAIKKONEN 10s stop/go penalty, converted to 30s post-race penalty, for rolling start infringement

LAP CHART What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin P Penalty L Car lapped Y Safety car R Red flag

NOBODY'S PERFECT, ALTHOUGH LECLERC COMES CLOSEST

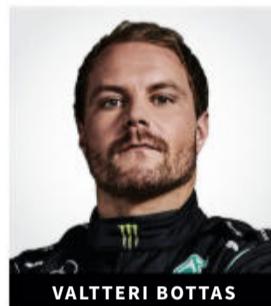
The Ferrari star couldn't quite make it to double figures on a weekend when he – and McLaren's Lando Norris – outscored the race winner

ALEX KALINAUKAS

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

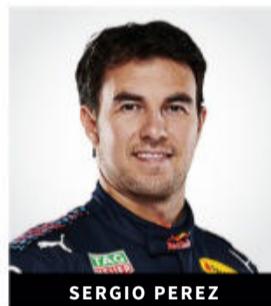


VALTTERI BOTTAS

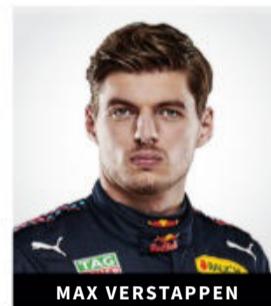
7 Although he was brilliant to beat F1's fastest cars in qualifying, his Q3 laps weren't perfect and his Tosa race off was a major error, so he can't score any higher than this. Acknowledged he was fortunate that the red flag gave him a lap back, and his chase back to second was very impressive.

3 This score is all about his poor Q3 and getting lapped. In Q3, Mercedes suggested only having one lap to gain the right tyre temperature cost him dear. His lack of race progress and further tyre warm-up struggles left him in a place no Mercedes should be, and vulnerable to an attack going wrong.

RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ



MAX VERSTAPPEN

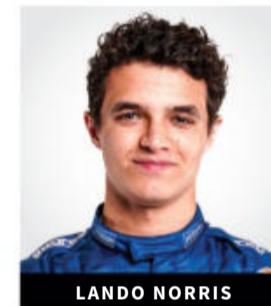
5 Considering his team-mate won and he came away pointless, Perez can't score higher, despite his Q3 efforts. Even then, his final lap might have been enough to claim pole were it not for a last-corner slip. His safety-car infraction was costly, while his spin after the restart was just poor.

8 His red-flag restart error isn't punished here because it didn't cost him anything, but what really lets him down was his final qualifying-run slip exiting Tamburello, which gave away pole and a grid position to his team-mate. Was mighty at the start and was a worthy race winner.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO



LANDO NORRIS

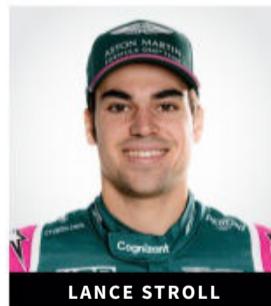
6 Only started ahead of Norris thanks to his team-mate's Q3 track-limits infraction, but did well to beat Gasly off the line. As the track started to dry, he grained his front-right tyre and was asked to move over for Norris when his pace suffered, which he accepted without "any fisticuffs".

9 We're using our discretion to bump Norris above eight because he was brilliant all weekend. The lap that got deleted would have had him starting third, and he was comfortably faster than his team-mate. Picked off Leclerc to take second and nearly held off Hamilton.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

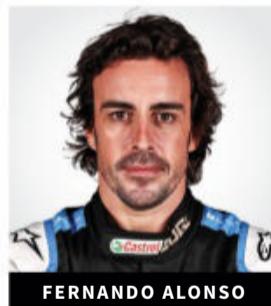


LANCE STROLL

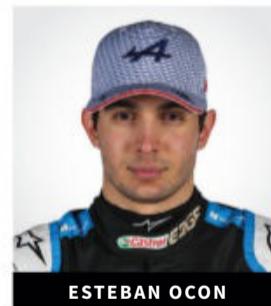
6 Still lacking confidence in the package and felt that was behind his Q2 exit. Race was hampered before the off given his brake problems meant a pitlane start. Looked like he might make progress to the points after the red flag, but faded and retired with a suspected gearbox issue.

7 Two mistakes combine to cost him in this score. The first was running too wide at Piratella in Q3, which meant he lined up 10th behind Ocon. The second was overtaking Gasly by cutting the second Tamburello apex during the early exchanges and not immediately giving the place back.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO



ESTEBAN OCON

6 Earns this score for a mix of his Q2 elimination, which involved being outqualified by both Williams cars, and for a Rivazza lock-up late on that let his team-mate past. Was frustrated by a power unit energy deployment issue, but seemed to struggle more compared to his team-mate.

8 Considering he had to pit at the end of lap one to shed the full wets, he produced a fine race drive. Add that to his excellent effort to make Q3 with a package that isn't guaranteed to be there – as Alonso proved – and he can't be scored lower. Battled well, relishing his pass on his team-mate late on.

FERRARI



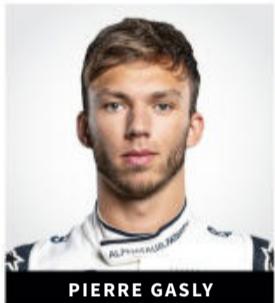
CHARLES LECLERC



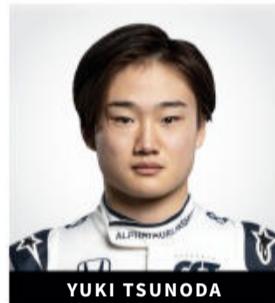
CARLOS SAINZ JR

9 Is the driver that gets closest to a maximum score, but misses out for not hanging on to Verstappen at the final restart. The resulting loss of a tow helped Norris blast ahead, and the podium he'd look nailed on to secure went begging. Also qualified a Ferrari fourth, where it still has no right to be.

6 This could be considered harsh given he came home only one place behind his team-mate, but his Q2 elimination when Leclerc qualified so high is critical. Then there were the off-track moments on the inters. Still, deserves credit for sticking to his task and beating Ricciardo home.

**ALPHATAURI**

PIERRE GASLY



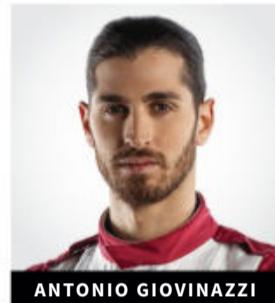
YUKI TSUNODA

8 Keeps a high rating because of his impressive qualifying allied with his excellent recovery from his wet-tyre starting strategy. The full wets left him as a rolling roadblock in the early stages, and he had to make an extra stop before the switch to slicks as a result. Battled back excellently.

4 Two mistakes at key moments give this score. The first was his Q1 Variante Alta crash, the result of him “just pushing too much”, which smashed his car and left him starting last. The second was his spin a split-second after making a crafty dive ahead of Hamilton at Tamburello on the red-flag restart.

ALFA ROMEO

KIMI RAIKKONEN



ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

6 Was boosted to eighth by Tsunoda and Perez spinning post-red flag and did well to stay there. But he’d dropped to 10th before the restart by spinning as he exited the pits, which meant he got a baffling post-race penalty for not regaining his places before the restart and then not pitting.

6 Marked down for qualifying behind his team-mate. Like Raikkonen, he gained four places on lap one, but only put in one pass – on Alonso. Tracked the lead Alfa throughout the race, but had to pit late on with a brake problem, which dropped him to a lapped 14th by the finish.

HAAS

NIKITA MAZEPIN



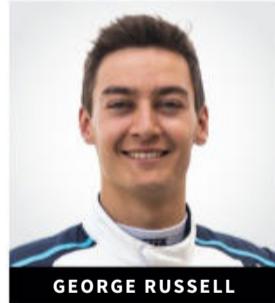
MICK SCHUMACHER

5 Earned Giovinazzi’s wrath for overtaking on their final Q1 runs, having been off the road several times in practice, but this gambit did not help him avoid the back row. Wasn’t to blame for the clash with Latifi and raced solidly from there, bar the late slip at Acque Minerali.

5 His score is boosted for being lead Haas driver in qualifying, but cops it for his safety car blunder, dropping it for the second race in a row. The resulting stop meant he could exchange his full wets for inters before his team-mate. Did at least hold on to win the intra-Haas chase to the finish.

WILLIAMS

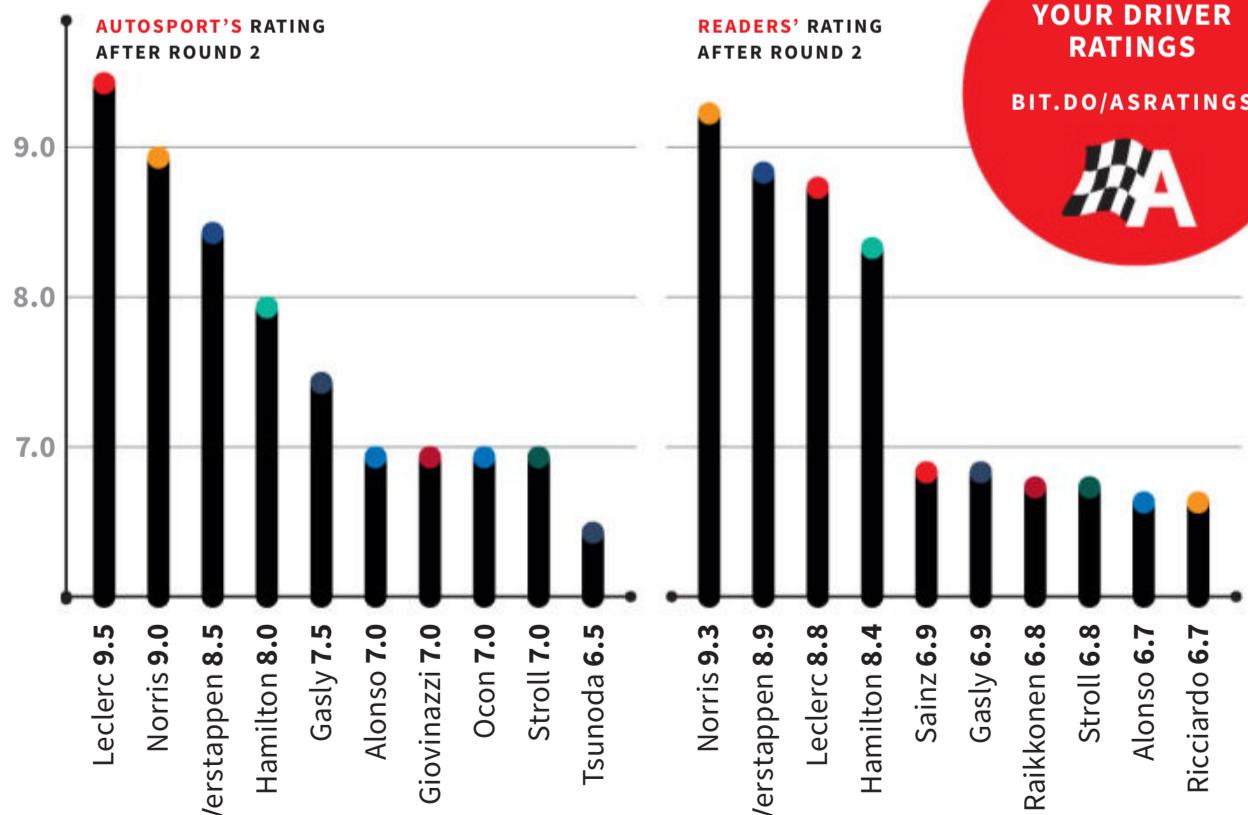
NICHOLAS LATIFI



GEORGE RUSSELL

4 This feels harsh given how good he was through practice and qualifying, impressing Williams with his strong mental attitude and pace. Made Q2, but was edged by Russell. Spun on the first lap and took himself out against Mazepin when rejoining, so can’t score higher.

5 Gets this score because the second time he needed to nail things when they really mattered it all went wrong. Even if the stewards judged the shunt with Bottas to be a racing incident, Russell has to take some blame. Delivered in Q1 and Q2 again, which boosts his score.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS

GIVE
YOUR DRIVER
RATINGS
BIT.DO/ASRATINGS





Palou delivers when the Chips are down

The Spaniard kept Will Power and team-mate Scott Dixon at bay to claim a superb victory on his first start with Chip Ganassi Racing

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

Last Sunday was a very special day for anyone involved in the Chip Ganassi Racing team, particularly those on the Honda-powered squad's #10 car. The IndyCar Series has been going to Barber Motorsports Park since 2010, yet Ganassi had never been to victory lane. For Dario Franchitti, it had always been something of a rare bogey track, while Scott Dixon had racked up eight podium finishes but had never stood on the top step.

He still hasn't. The six-time and reigning series champion added a ninth Barber podium to his CV in the 2021 IndyCar Series season opener, but the day was stolen by his new team-mate Alex Palou.

The Spanish series sophomore joined a shortlist of drivers to win on their first outing with Ganassi – the others were Michael Andretti in 1994 and Dan Wheldon in 2006 – and did so in utterly convincing style. When you beat Will Power and Dixon at their own game – going fast while making a tricky fuel strategy work – you can hold your head up high.

But it was another relative novice embarking on only his second full IndyCar season who started from pole. Pato O'Ward topped qualifying for the second time in his short career, the #5 Arrow McLaren SP driver achieving the feat in swashbuckling style, slipping his Chevrolet-engined car over kerbs, catching and releasing, trusting

in his fast hands and deft footwork to lay down his fastest laps in the three qualifying segments. He was less than a tenth quicker than Alexander Rossi's Honda-powered Andretti Autosport car, on a track that apparently suits the HPD engines given their better torque.

Palou, Dixon and Marcus Ericsson all landed their Ganassi cars in the Firestone Fast Six, suggesting that as well as benefiting from Honda shovels, the team had done fine work over the winter to improve its road-course performance. Team Penske driver Power ensured that there were two Chevys in the Fast Six, although he felt that his flawed tyre strategy in qualifying had prevented a front-row start.



ABBOTT

...and gets a champs-drinking lesson from the old maestro

HOW THE OLD ROOKIES GOT ON



CANTRELL

When IndyCar's rookie field comprises the three-time and reigning Australian Supercars champion, a NASCAR legend, and a multiple podium finisher in Formula 1, it's inevitable that pre-season speculation will devote a lot of chatter to them. In fact, all three did about as well as could be expected and could reflect on high points of the weekend.

Romain Grosjean delivered brilliantly in qualifying, grabbing seventh on the grid in his Dale Coyne Racing car, less than 0.1 seconds from progressing into the Firestone Fast Six. Although he and team-mate Ed Jones weren't in the same group of 12 in Q1, so a direct comparison can't be made, RoGro was half a second quicker than the 2016 Indy Lights champion. Coming home 10th on race day – fifth of the two-stoppers – was a commendable start to his career.

Scott McLaughlin had to use both sets of his red Firestone tyres to progress from Q1, and he was still 0.53s slower than Team Penske team-mate Will Power in that first group, but he was within 0.07s of one of his other team-mates, Josef Newgarden, and 0.2s faster than his third stablemate, Simon Pagenaud. With worn 'reds', he was consigned to 12th on the grid, but he finished the race 14th, and has tripled his previous experience, after retiring early on his debut in 2020's finale.

Considering Jimmie Johnson was 3.7s behind his team-mates in his first group test at Barber last autumn, and that rookies don't get to try Firestone's alternate compound in testing – they get their first taste during FP2, along with everyone else – it says much for his skillset and hard work that he was only 1.8s off the ultimate pace in Q1, and that he outqualified Dalton Kellett.

Yes, on race day Johnson spun his Chip Ganassi Racing car when he lost downforce while following Rinus VeeKay over a crest, but he persevered and his fastest lap was just 1.62s off the best from fellow three-stopper Pato O'Ward. For an IndyCar debutant, whatever his background and regardless of him being in the best car, that's impressive.

His team-mate Josef Newgarden would find himself being outqualified by an IndyCar debutant, but it was not newest member of the Penske clan Scott McLaughlin (who started an impressive 12th). Instead it was ex-Formula 1 driver Romain Grosjean in his Honda-motivated Dale Coyne Racing car who sat alongside Newgarden on the fourth row.

The Frenchman, who celebrated his 35th birthday last weekend, would be grateful to have that small margin over the two-time champion at the start of the race. While O'Ward, Rossi, Palou, Power, Dixon, Ericsson and Grosjean filed through Turns 1, 2 and 3 of this magnificent 2.38-mile course in Leeds, Alabama at the drop of the green flag, all hell broke loose behind when Newgarden slipped wide on the exit of Turn 4 on the long uphill climb before the circuit dips down to Turn 5. When his wheels touched the grass, Newgarden spun broadside and was struck hard by two Andretti Autosport cars – first Colton Herta, then Ryan Hunter-Reay – and in the ensuing melee of abrupt slowing, swerving avoidance and flying debris, Felix Rosenqvist (who had started his Arrow McLaren SP car at the rear after spinning and causing a red flag in qualifying) was sent airborne. Also caught up were Max Chilton (Carlin) and Rinus VeeKay (Ed Carpenter Racing), who spun and sustained a puncture, and limped around to the pits.

It was remarkable that the AMR Safety

Team was able to clear the track after just five caution laps, but that was enough for anyone who'd been keeping their options open about whether to run the 90 laps with two or three stops to go for the former strategy. This decision was seemingly cemented when NASCAR legend and IndyCar debutant Jimmie Johnson caused another yellow a couple of laps after the restart with a spin just past the blind crest down to Turn 14. He couldn't bump-start his car, so the AMR Safety Team had to come and fire him up, costing him a lap and causing another three-lap caution period. Now it was inevitable that here, on a track where it is very tricky to pass a car of similar speed, frontrunners would go for a two-stop strategy. Sure, it left a driver running at slightly reduced pace and wary of using the fuel-guzzling push-to-pass boost, but it was still theoretically quicker than a three-stopper, which would leave a driver with too many cars to pass too often.

Yet O'Ward and Rossi were committed to a three-stopper. O'Ward was desperate to get off his alternate Firestones and onto the harder primaries, having never been able to escape Rossi's attention. Meanwhile, the pair had been stalked through the opening stint by Palou, who had pulled away by almost three seconds from Power and Dixon. Once O'Ward and Rossi had stopped and fallen to 15th and 16th, Palou continued to stretch away from Power. "It just blew my mind how fast Alex was in that first >>

stint," remarked an admiring Power. "I had absolutely nothing for him; he just pulled away, so I figured he was doing a three-stop race, because I was getting the best lap time I could for the fuel number [target]..."

Palou stopped at the end of lap 31, Dixon and Ericsson pitted a lap later, and Power stretched his fuel one tour beyond that. They resumed in the order of Palou, Power, Dixon and Ericsson. Although O'Ward passed this quartet – on track, in the case of Palou – the 2018 Indy Lights champion would have two more stops to make. Already his task of trying to pull 30 seconds in the course of 57 laps looked impossible. He would make his second stop on lap 42, this time for new primary Firestones, and Rossi, who had zapped Power but never made it past Palou, pitted next time by.

O'Ward now struggled to get his fresh Firestone blacks up to temperature, and he was mugged at Turn 5 by Sébastien Bourdais and Graham Rahal. Soon VeeKay, recovering from his blameless involvement in the first-lap chaos, was also ahead.

Power, Dixon and Ericsson, now running in convoy, had shaved Palou's lead from 10s to 7.5s by lap 50, this trio 11s clear of the AJ Foyt Racing car of Bourdais, but they made no further gains until Palou hit traffic five laps later, and his advantage slipped under the 5s mark. Ericsson was the first of these frontrunners to pit for a second time, stopping on lap 60, with 30 to go. Palou and Dixon were in next time by, and again Power went one lap further before pitting for scuffed primaries. Penske's 2014 champion emerged still just ahead of Dixon, and the pair of them were much closer to Palou.

O'Ward and Rossi were left running first and second, six seconds apart, until Rossi stopped on lap 65, and O'Ward a lap later. The Arrow McLaren SP team got O'Ward out ahead of Ericsson, but the Ganassi driver on warm tyres took him up the inside on the exit of Turn 5 to move into fourth. Rossi, however, was now separated from O'Ward by Bourdais, VeeKay, and Rahal, and would make no further progress.

With 20 laps to go, O'Ward tried to retaliate on Ericsson, who was struggling



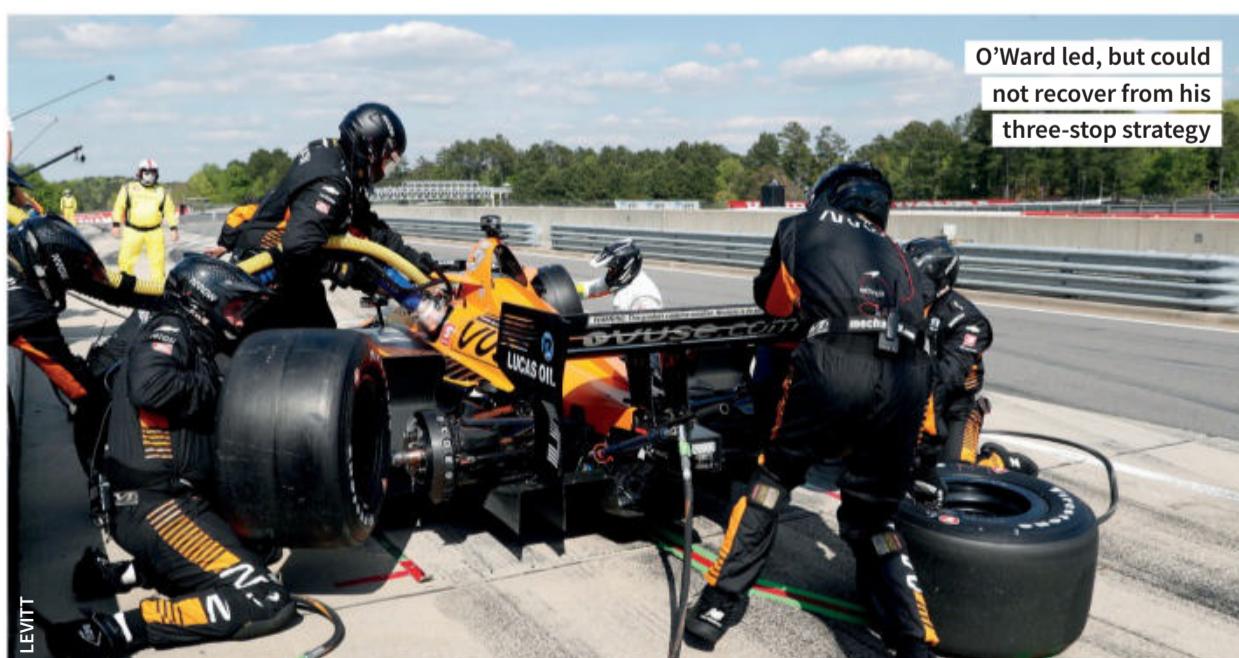
to eke out his fuel, and with 16 remaining he dived down the inside of the Ganassi driver at Turn 5 to reclaim fourth, but he was now seven seconds behind Dixon.

Up front, Palou's margin over Power concertinaed in and out according to traffic in the final 15 laps, but basically stayed the right side of 2s and, with 10 laps to go, that was the same margin that Power had over Dixon. Palou then struggled to lap Conor Daly, who had outpaced team-mate VeeKay for most of the weekend, but whose tactics had left him adrift of the Dutchman on race day. Power drew to within 1.2s of the leader with four laps to go, but it wasn't

until the final two tours that his strategist Ron Ruszewski decided that the #12 Penske machine had enough fuel left to allow Power to start using the push-to-pass boost. That left the Aussie with little time to hunt down his quarry. Palou paid out the line on the final lap, so his winning margin was only 0.4s, but he had it all in hand. Power was nonetheless pleased with his best result in a season-opening race since 2015, while Dixon seemed reasonably content with third.

Over the last 16 laps, O'Ward charged hard and drew to within 1s of the old Ganassi master, but ultimately had to settle for fourth, albeit first of the three-stoppers. Behind him, Ericsson was further demoted by Bourdais and VeeKay, and then lost seventh to Rahal on the penultimate lap, before running out of gas on the slowdown lap.

Bourdais, who had looked so fast in pre-season testing, had underwhelmed in qualifying with only 16th on the grid, but drove a brilliant race despite his Foyt car's underwing sustaining damage from the first-lap debris. He made a three-stop strategy work, pouncing on more gently driven two-stopping cars and climbing to fifth. VeeKay, too, showed the maturity and calmness missing at times from his rookie season, overcoming his 'extra' pitstop to replace the punctured tyre to claim sixth. Team-mate Daly struggled to make a





two-stop strategy work, and his ECR crew struggled in one of his stops, so that he wound up 16th.

There was no doubting the star of the day, however. Asked if he could have matched O'Ward and Rossi for pace, had the race played in the favour of the three-stoppers and he'd stuck to that original strategy, Palou replied: "You never know. You never know what could happen, but I think I [would have been] able just because when we started pushing, like when we were racing with them, I was saving fuel already. I was hitting my numbers and I was just keeping my tyres and saving fuel to be able to go for a two-stop."

That's exactly how it looked. The Palou-Ganassi-Honda combo had the requisite pace and fuel mileage to deliver whatever the circumstances, and Palou has the necessary composure to deliver. ■

NEXT REPORT

ST PETERSBURG 29 APRIL ISSUE

They're heading east to the Florida streets for this weekend, just a few months after the popular venue closed the 2020 season.



RESULTS ROUND 1/15, BARBER M'SPORTS PARK (USA), 18 APRIL, 90 LAPS - 207.000 MILES

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	1h52m53.0361s
2	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	+0.4016s
3	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	+2.9881s
4	Patricio O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren SP/Dallara-Chevrolet	+3.9741s
5	Sebastien Bourdais (FRA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises/Dallara-Chevrolet	+10.6967s
6	Rinus van Kalmthout (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing/Dallara-Chevrolet	+13.8750s
7	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Dallara-Honda	+18.7387s
8	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	+20.0700s
9	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Autosport/Dallara-Honda	+20.5601s
10	Romain Grosjean (FRA)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR/Dallara-Honda	+45.0805s
11	Jack Harvey (GBR)	Meyer Shank Racing/Dallara-Honda	+50.0788s
12	Simon Pagenaud (FRA)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	+59.0522s
13	Takuma Sato (JPN)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Dallara-Honda	+1m05.5887s
14	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m06.0562s
15	Ed Jones (ARE)	Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan/Dallara-Honda	+1m08.4093s
16	Conor Daly (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing/Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m09.1076s
17	James Hinchcliffe (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport/Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
18	Dalton Kellett (CAN)	AJ Foyt Enterprises/Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
19	Jimmie Johnson (USA)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	-3 laps
20	Max Chilton (GBR)	Carlin/Dallara-Chevrolet	-4 laps
21	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Arrow McLaren SP/Dallara-Chevrolet	62 laps-retired
22	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Autosport/Dallara-Honda	25 laps-retired
23	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	0 laps-accident
24	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport/Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 110.025mph. **Fastest lap** O'Ward 1m06.8182s, 123.918mph.

Q3 1 O'Ward 1m05.8479s; 2 Rossi 1m05.9177s; 3 Palou 1m06.0538s; 4 Power 1m06.1186s; 5 Dixon 1m06.3976s; 6 Ericsson 1m06.4102s.
Q2 O'Ward 1m05.5019s; Power 1m05.5226s; Palou 1m05.6328s; Ericsson 1m05.6614s; Dixon 1m05.6863s; Rossi 1m05.6953s; 7 Grosjean 1m05.7643s; 8 Newgarden 1m05.7902s; 9 Herta 1m05.7957s; 10 Daly 1m05.9118s; 11 Harvey 1m05.9634s; 12 McLaughlin 1m06.7226s.
Q1 – GROUP 1 Palou 1m05.9032s; Power 1m05.9191s; Newgarden 1m06.3881s; McLaughlin 1m06.4552s; Ericsson 1m06.4992s; Harvey 1m06.5234s; 13 Jones 1m06.5578s; 15 Pagenaud 1m06.6480s; 17 Hunter-Reay 1m06.8512s; 19 Sato 1m07.1026s; 21 Johnson 1m07.7092s; 23 Kellett 1m07.8100s.
Q1 – GROUP 2 O'Ward 1m06.0696s; Grosjean 1m06.0709s; Daly 1m06.1033s; Rossi 1m06.2344s; Dixon 1m06.3775s; Herta 1m06.4282s; 14 van Kalmthout 1m06.4770s; 16 Bourdais 1m06.5035s; 18 Rahal 1m06.8489s; 20 Chilton 1m07.0021s; 22 Rosenqvist 1m07.0254s; 24 Hinchcliffe no time.
CHAMPIONSHIP
1 Palou 53; 2 Power 41; 3 Dixon 35; 4 O'Ward 34; 5 Bourdais 31; 6 van Kalmthout 29; 7 Rahal 26; 8 Ericsson 24; 9 Rossi 22; 10 Grosjean 20.



WORLD OF SPORT

Dinamic finds further joy at Monza

SRO

**GT WORLD CHALLENGE
ENDURANCE CUP
MONZA (ITA)
18 APRIL
ROUND 1/5**

The Italian Dinamic Motorsport squad wasn't among the favourites when it pitched up at Monza for its maiden appearance in what was then known as the Blancpain GT Series back in 2019. But the Porsche team pulled off a dramatic win in a rain-affected race interrupted by multiple safety cars. Copy and paste all of the above on the championship's return to the Autodromo last weekend. Only the series is now called the GT World Challenge Europe, and of course it wasn't Dinamic's debut.

Christian Engelhart, Matteo Cairoli and Klaus Bachler, the only 'survivor' from the winning line-up in 2019, took the victory in the opening round of the Endurance Cup leg of the GTWCE. Their Porsche 911 GT3-R started only 12th — not quite as far back as the 23rd of two years ago — but the rear-engined machine quickly emerged as a contender in Engelhart's hands.

The German jumped to ninth on the opening lap, and as the rain began, light drizzle at first, he gained a couple more places. He was among the first to stop for wet-weather Pirellis during the first yellow-flag period after 10 laps and had made it as high as fifth in the couple of green-flag laps before the race was neutralised again.

Engelhart stopped early during the next set of yellows for the car's first refuelling and the change-over to Cairoli. The Italian

was fourth at the halfway mark, quickly made it up to third and then overtook Daniel Juncadella's Auto Sport Promotion Mercedes-AMG GT3 for second.

When race leader Luca Stolz sustained what the Haupt Racing Team described as a puncture on the left-rear of his Merc, the Dinamic car moved to the front. Stolz, who shared the lead HRT entry with Maro Engel and Vincent Abril, wasn't the only driver to suffer a problem with the hard-used left-rear on a drying track.

Bachler had a lead of six or so seconds on the ASP car now with Jules Gounon at the wheel before the final set of yellow flags. That set up a 40-minute dash to the flag, but the Merc started by Raffaele Marciello had nothing for the Porsche. Gounon's cause wasn't helped by having his mirrors full of the third-place Emil Frey Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo driven by Ricardo Feller. He did come back at Bachler as the clock ticked down, crossing the line a shade under three seconds in arrears, but was never

remotely within striking range.

Bachler summed up another against-the-odds victory for Dinamic when he said "we made the right decisions at the right moments".

Feller crossed the line just three tenths down on Gounon in the Lambo he shared with Rolf Ineichen and Alex Fontana. They gained good fortune out of bad in the middle of the second hour when Fontana sustained a puncture, which resulted in an early switch to slicks that proved the key to the Emil Frey car's victory in the Silver Cup class.

The two factory-supported Iron Lynx Ferrari 488 GT3s were also early stoppers for slicks on the way to fourth and fifth positions, Callum Ilott, Antonio Fuoco and Davide Rigon leading home Alessandro Pier Guidi, Nicklas Nielsen and Come Ledogar.

GARY WATKINS

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Regional battle is looking a little bit Saucy

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

IMOLA (ITA)

17-18 APRIL

ROUND 1/10

Gregoire Saucy leads the standings after the opening round of the newly merged Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine, which supported last weekend's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola.

The ART Grand Prix-run Swiss scored his very first win in cars in Sunday's race, following up his fifth position from Saturday. That opener was led all the way from pole by Prema Powerteam's Spanish talent David Vidales. Team-mate Paul Aron made it an all-Prema front row, but a poor start from the Estonian Mercedes F1 junior allowed Alex Quinn into second.

Arden International's Cornish talent kept the pressure on Vidales, but twice was caught napping a little at safety car restarts. A third safety car caused the race to end under caution, with Quinn second from Hadrien David (R-ace GP), Aron and Saucy.



The sequel was a good deal more entertaining between the unwelcome safety car infestations, even though Saucy led throughout from pole. This time it was David who made a duff start from the front row, allowing Aron into second and 2019 British F4 champion Zane Maloney – who had retired with a technical failure on the first lap of race one – into third.

Vidales tried to wrestle past Maloney at Tosa on the first lap, but ran wide onto the grass, losing several places.

The fight for fourth now became the focus, as Quinn tried everything to pass

Prema's Swedish Ferrari protege Dino Beganovic. He rounded Beganovic at Tosa and drew slightly ahead up the hill towards Piratella on the outside line. Both drivers then appeared to try to give each other room, but the track was just too narrow. Quinn ended up in the gravel; Beganovic in the pits for a new front wing.

David therefore moved up to fourth behind R-ace team-mate Maloney, while Arden's William Alatalo made it a brace of top-six finishes with fifth. Gabriele Mini (ART) passed the recovering Vidales for sixth in another exciting battle.

WRT win to open ELMS account

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

BARCELONA (ESP)

18 APRIL

ROUND 1/6

WRT won the opening round of the 2021 European Le Mans Series in dominant fashion. Robert Kubica, Louis Deletraz and Yifei Ye impressed behind the wheel of the Belgian squad's ORECA Gibson-07 LMP2 machine to beat a stellar field at the Barcelona circuit.

Deletraz took the lead early on following a chaotic start and quickly built up a healthy lead over the 16-car LMP2 field. The Swiss racer was partly helped by an on-track incident and subsequent drivethrough penalty for the G-Drive Racing Aurus that put the polesitting car out of contention for victory.



Ye took over from Deletraz at the 100-minute mark and proved too rapid to catch, the Chinese driver extending the team's lead before fellow rookie Kubica brought the car home in the final stint, winning by 22 seconds. Behind Team WRT, Panis Racing finished a comfortable second while reigning champion United Autosports and former title winner G-Drive Racing battled hard, coming home in third and fourth, albeit almost a lap down.

The new LMP2 Pro-Am category went to the Ultimate team, the French outfit impressing with a metronomic run to fifth overall on its first LMP2 outing.

Matt Bell, Niklas Krutten and Nicolas Maulini came from behind in the Cool Racing Ligier JSP320 to win the LMP3 class ahead of British team RLR Msport. The GTE category was dominated by the Iron Lynx team, Matteo Cressoni, Rino Mastronardi and local hero Miguel Molina's Ferrari 488 beating the Proton Competition Porsche.

NELSON VALKENBURG

motorsport.tv

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WEEKEND WINNERS

GT WORLD CHALLENGE ENDURANCE CUP

MONZA (ITA)

Matteo Cairoli/Christian Engelhart/Klaus Bachler
Dinamic Motorsport (Porsche 911 GT3-R)

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

IMOLA (ITA)

Race 1 David Vidales (below)
Prema Powerteam
Race 2 Gregoire Saucy
ART Grand Prix

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

BARCELONA (ESP)

Louis Deletraz/Robert Kubica/Yifei Ye
Team WRT (ORECA Gibson-07)



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Whincup's win in race
two ended a seven-race
streak for van Gisbergen

Whincup interrupts the van Gisbergen show

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYMONDS PLAINS (AUS)
17-18 APRIL
ROUND 3/12

Shane van Gisbergen's remarkable winning streak came to an end at Symmons Plains as Jamie Whincup and Chaz Mostert opened their respective 2021 accounts.

Van Gisbergen arrived in Tasmania on a six-race unbeaten run that extended back to last year's Bathurst 1000. The Kiwi owned Saturday's running on the compact circuit, his pole effort particularly impressive as he ended up 0.3 seconds clear in a session where the entire field was barely separated by 1s.

Van Gisbergen briefly fell behind Cam

Waters at the start, before reclaiming the lead and charging to a comfortable victory. That made him just the third driver to win seven straight Supercars wins, alongside Whincup and Craig Lowndes.

On Sunday, Whincup ended Triple Eight Holden team-mate van Gisbergen's streak with a well-crafted win in the second race of the weekend. The seven-time champion started from second after being beaten to pole by Waters. But while Waters was quick over a lap, taking both Sunday poles, his Tickford Mustang chewed through its rubber in the races. He was eventually a sitting duck for Whincup, who took a 123rd career win ahead of van Gisbergen and Will Davison.

Mostert then rounded out the weekend

with a dominant win from the outside of the front row. He did absorb some pressure from Waters in the first stint after getting the jump at the start, but was able to gap his former Ford team-mate around the stops. From there, Mostert could cruise to what was his first win in a Holden and the first for Walkinshaw Andretti United since Albert Park in 2018. Waters held on to second until two laps from home before he was overtaken by Dick Johnson Racing Ford pair Anton de Pasquale and Will Davison.

Whincup's Sunday effort left him as the best scorer for the round, although he still sits 139 points behind van Gisbergen in the standings.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

Bowman nabs surprise win at Richmond

NASCAR CUP
RICHMOND (USA)
18 APRIL
ROUND 9/36

Alex Bowman surprised the field and himself by grabbing the lead on a restart late in the race at Richmond and hanging on for the win.

Bowman lined up third for the final restart behind Denny Hamlin and Joey Logano, and startled them both by heading for the top lane and passing them to take the lead with 10 of the 400 laps to go. He managed to hold off Hamlin to nab his first NASCAR Cup win of the 2021 season and first as the new driver of Hendrick Motorsports' #48 Chevrolet.

Bowman managed to get in position to contend for the win despite a penalty for an uncontrolled tyre during the pitstop at the start of the final stage.

"To be honest with you, we were



terrible on short runs," he said. "We restarted third and I'm like, 'Man, if we get out of here with a solid top-five, we'll be good.' We've overcome a lot today."

"I don't know if Greg [Ives, crew chief] pumped the [air] pressures way up or what he did, but that's more grip than I've ever had in a race car at Richmond and it worked out really well. Getting to race a guy like Denny at a place like this is really cool. I feel like we raced each other really clean, so I'm appreciative of that. It means a lot."

Together, Hamlin, Joey Logano and Martin Truex Jr led 363 of the 400 laps. In the past two races, Hamlin has led 483 tours but is yet to win this season.

JIM UTTER

WEEKEND WINNERS

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYMONDS PLAINS (AUS)
Race 1 Shane van Gisbergen
Triple Eight (Holden Commodore ZB)
Race 2 Jamie Whincup
Triple Eight (Holden Commodore ZB)
Race 3 Chaz Mostert
Walkinshaw Andretti United
(Holden Commodore ZB)

NASCAR CUP
RICHMOND (USA)
Alex Bowman
Hendrick Motorsports
(Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 1LE)

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
RICHMOND (USA)
John Hunter Nemechek (below)
Kyle Busch Motorsports (Toyota Tundra)



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Eleven-year itch: Quartararo earns Yamaha its best start since 2010

MOTOGP
ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT)
18 APRIL
ROUND 3/19

The last time Yamaha won the opening three rounds of a MotoGP season was back in 2010. Things worked out quite well for the Japanese marque that year, as Jorge Lorenzo guided his M1 to the first of his three premier class titles.

Whether history will repeat itself is nothing more than wishful thinking at this stage. But Fabio Quartararo is certainly going about his business so far this season in a way that suggests that a championship charge is very much on the cards.

Quartararo's start to the term isn't that

far removed from how he kicked off his 2020 campaign, which ultimately crumbled to nothing. But Portugal's Algarve circuit was one of his weakest venues last year, when he finished 24.4 seconds off the lead down in 14th. Fast-forward five months, and he was victorious by 4.8s to cross the line 26s quicker than his previous effort.

He offered a glimpse of what was to follow on Saturday in FP4, setting a consistent run of 1m39s laps on both the medium and hard rear-tyre options. This would prove crucial homework for Sunday, the warmer conditions for the race leading Quartararo, as well his Yamaha stablemates and the KTM quartet, to opt for the harder rear rubber.

Similar to how he achieved his Doha win earlier this month, Quartararo slipped

from pole to sixth on the opening lap. But he was back to fourth come the outside of the uphill Turn 4 left-hander when he took advantage of the returning Marc Marquez clipping Joan Mir's rear wheel, which also slowed Jack Miller's Ducati.

The Pramac Ducati of Johann Zarco led the early stages, with Suzuki duo Alex Rins and Mir in tow. Mir had carved past the fast-starting Marquez Honda on lap one in a manner aggressive enough to suggest it was payback for the pair's skirmish in qualifying.

Rins made a move stick on Zarco at Turn 13 on lap five, and Quartararo caught his compatriot out at the next turn to steal second. Quartararo used his supreme front-end confidence on his M1 to outbrake Rins into Turn 1 on lap nine, beginning a stint at the front that would take him all the way to the chequered flag for his second successive win.

But it wasn't without pressure. As Quartararo dipped into the 1m39s for the first time on lap 11, Rins did the same. The pair traded fastest laps on a number of occasions. The book was sealed on Quartararo's win when Rins slid off at Turn 5 seven laps from the finish.

Zarco would slide out a lap later at Turn 10 due to a gearbox issue, promoting Francesco Bagnaia on the works Ducati to a second place that he would then defend all the way to the finish ahead of world champion Mir and the Petronas SRT Yamaha of Franco Morbidelli.

Quartararo's win was a significant one.

Marc Marquez: back in the saddle to score seventh on his return





It proved that his Qatar victory was no fluke, while also giving him a healthy 15-point lead in the championship.

But it's a win that pales next to Marquez's result. Nine months after suffering the broken arm that ruled him out of the 2020 campaign, required three operations and plunged his illustrious career into doubt, his run to seventh – while physically wiped out after a weekend of riding – was as impressive as it was emotional.

The late great Murray Walker's 'lump in my throat' line sprang to mind watching the images of Marquez "exploding" with emotion as he broke down in tears after his "dream" return race. The rest had better watch their backs now.

Marquez beat Marquez in the race, with younger brother Alex clocking eighth for LCR Honda, while Brad Binder on the KTM and Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro rounded out the top six on a day when the Formula 1 and MotoGP paddocks united for a moment of silence to remember Fausto Gresini after his COVID-related death in February. Avintia Ducati rider Enea Bastianini took top rookie honours in ninth ahead of Takaaki Nakagami, battered and bruised following a 150mph crash off his LCR Honda in FP2.

A "worried" Maverick Vinales was 11th after a race hindered by a lack of grip, which he feels was "not normal". How he responds to this latest frustration in the coming races will very much determine the Yamaha man's status as a championship challenger in 2021.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 3/19, ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT), 18 APRIL (25 LAPS - 71.333 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	41m46.412s
2	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	+4.809s
3	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+4.948s
4	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+5.127s
5	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+6.668s
6	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+8.885s
7	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Honda	+13.208s
8	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	+17.992s
9	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+22.369s
10	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+23.676s
11	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	+23.761s
12	Luca Marini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+29.660s
13	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Tech3 KTM	+29.836s
14	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	+38.941s
15	Iker Lecuona (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+50.642s
16	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	-1 lap
R	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	19 laps-crash
R	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	18 laps-crash
R	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	14 laps-crash
R	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	5 laps-crash
R	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	4 laps-rear brake
NS	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	crash

Winner's average speed 102.457mph. **Fastest lap** Rins 1m39.450s, 103.288mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Quartararo 1m38.862s; 2 Rins 1m38.951s; 3 Zarco 1m38.991s; 4 Miller 1m39.061s; 5 Morbidelli 1m39.103s; 6 M Marquez 1m39.121s; 7 A Espargaro 1m39.169s; 8 Marini 1m39.386s; 9 Mir 1m39.398s; 10 Oliveira 1m39.445s; 11 Bagnaia 1m39.482s; 12 Vinales 1m39.807s.

QUALIFYING 1 M Marquez 1m39.253s; Mir 1m39.302s; 13 A Marquez 1m39.530s; 14 P Espargaro 1m39.710s; 15 Binder 1m39.776s; 16 Bastianini 1m39.855s; 17 Rossi 1m39.943s; 18 Petrucci 1m40.202s; 19 Lecuona 1m40.408s; 20 Savadori 1m40.444s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Quartararo 61; 2 Bagnaia 46; 3 Vinales 41; 4 Zarco 40; 5 Mir 38; 6 A Espargaro 25; 7 Rins 23; 8 Binder 21; 9 Bastianini 18; 10 Martin 17; 11 Morbidelli 17; 12 Miller 14; 13 P Espargaro 11; 14 M Marquez 9; 15 A Marquez 8; 16 Stefan Bradl 7; 17 Nakagami 6; 18 Marini 4; 19 Rossi 4; 20 Oliveira 4; 21 Petrucci 3; 22 Savadori 2; 23 Lecuona 1.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Yamaha 75; 2 Ducati 60; 3 Suzuki 42; 4 Aprilia 25; 5 KTM 22; 6 Honda 20.



WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

ALGARVE (PRT)

Raul Fernandez
KTM Ajo
(Kalex)

MOTO 3

ALGARVE (PRT)

Pedro Acosta (below)
KTM Ajo
(KTM)



NEXT REPORT

SPANISH GP 6 MAY ISSUE

Next time out at Jerez, will Yamaha continue its sterling start to the year? And what can Marc Marquez achieve at a venue where he's won three times but also where he broke his arm last year?

THE DRIVER McLAREN OVERLOOKED FOR RAIKKONEN

Nick Heidfeld had McLaren support and outscored his rookie team-mate at Sauber in 2001, but it was Kimi Raikkonen who joined the frontrunning Woking squad. The German looks back 20 years

ADAM COOPER

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

The recent 20th anniversary of Kimi Raikkonen's Formula 1 debut was a timely reminder of the impact that the Finn made back in 2001. It was one of the sport's great stories. A guy straight out of Formula Renault 2.0, who drove his first few grands prix with a provisional superlicence, became a regular top-six contender. He did so well that he was headhunted by McLaren, at great expense, to replace double world champion Mika Häkkinen.

But what of the man who partnered Raikkonen at Sauber that year, who not only found his own strong performance overshadowed by his rookie team-mate, but had also originally been earmarked for the McLaren drive?

At the time, Nick Heidfeld was the next big thing. Supported by McLaren and Mercedes from an early stage, he won the prestigious German Formula 3 title in 1997. McLaren boss Ron Dennis even built an F3000 team around him and, having finished a close runner-up to Juan Pablo Montoya in 1998, Heidfeld won the championship the following year.

His reward was a difficult first F1 season at a dying Prost team

**"YOU NEED TO BE IN A DECENT CAR.
AS SEEN WITH GEORGE RUSSELL,
IT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE"**

before he landed a Sauber seat for 2001. "The Prost year obviously was a lot worse than everybody had expected," recalls Heidfeld, now 43. "I think we were last in the championship, even behind Minardi, which was normally the slowest in those days. My car caught fire every second or third race, so it was good to get a chance at Sauber. The expectation was to be better than with Prost, somewhere in the midfield maybe, for sure not as high as what we then managed to achieve in 2001."

The Ferrari-powered C20, with its twin-keel innovation, is still arguably the best F1 car the team has produced. It was fifth-fastest over the season and more reliable than the quicker Jordan, helping Sauber take a surprise fourth in the constructors' championship, after being eighth in 2000.

"It was not primarily just looking at results, but at this stage of your career, being able to show yourself," adds Heidfeld. ➤

ETHERINGTON





SUTTON



"You need to be in a decent car at least to do that and, as you've seen with George Russell, it makes a huge difference. People like to say, 'Yeah, we all know he's super-quick', but it's still different than if he sits in a good car."

Heidfeld also found himself with a surprise team-mate in the form of Raikkonen, who had impressed the Swiss team so much in a test at Mugello in September 2000 that all the stops were pulled out to secure him a race seat. It even meant compromising the team's relationship with main sponsor Red Bull.

"I remember very vividly when Kimi came on the scene and meeting him for the first time at Sauber's headquarters," recalls Heidfeld. "He made an impression on the team and also on me, the first time when I saw him.

"He was very shy. He's still a cool and special character, but back then he was even more shy. But there was something special about him, and he made a good impression on his first test.

"There was a big discussion, if he would be allowed to race and people didn't want to give him a licence. And the other thing was that it surely had an impact on the connection that the team had with Red Bull, because they wanted Enrique Bernoldi [see 18 March 2021 issue for Bernoldi's story].

"It was a bit of a fight, and I think not long after that the fantastic partnership and relationship they had with Red Bull was stopped. And while it was the right decision to take Kimi on board, as time has shown, Red Bull was not too happy that Sauber didn't go for Bernoldi."

Heidfeld had good reason to think that he would be the senior driver in the team, given their relative levels of experience: "A little bit, but I would say apart from the season with Prost I never felt or went into a season thinking, 'OK, I'm the number two' or, 'I'm not the leader'. You always earn your position very quickly.

"I've seen that in other teams, where people thought I would be number two. Not only for me, other drivers as well, but if you do a good job, not only be quick but work together well with the team and move the team forward, things just change.

"I thought a little bit more about being the leader, because Kimi was that young. But I never, including that season, went into a team thinking I'm a clear number one, or that the other one was a nobody. I was open and aware of how quick the situation can change."

The season could hardly have started better for Sauber in Australia, where Heidfeld finished fourth and Raikkonen



seventh, before being promoted to sixth and a debut point after Olivier Panis was penalised.

"My first points in F1 after the Prost season," says Heidfeld. "There was a big relief, not only for the team, but also for myself, knowing that now I was in a team where I could show what was possible, and probably could achieve more than we had hoped for.

"Kimi was sixth, so we had a double points finish, which in those times was really unusual, because it was only points for the top six. If you have three dominating teams, and they don't make a mistake, you're out of the equation. It was Ferrari, McLaren and Williams, and normally you could not fight with them. So just to be in the points was a big thing."

A couple of races later Heidfeld took a superb third place in a wet Brazilian GP. Raikkonen made a rare mistake, spinning off in spectacular style, but not before he had got the attention of his team-mate.

"Brazil, the first podium of my career, was obviously very, very special, a podium together with David Coulthard and Michael Schumacher," says Heidfeld, who has perhaps a surprising view on where Raikkonen's strengths were even then. "I remember it very vividly and I thought I was doing a very, very good pace. And I was looking in the mirror, and Kimi sort of kept with me. I was making a very small gap. But you have to remember how young he was, and it was his third race.





"I was very impressed by how quickly he moved forward and did a good performance. And this was also something during the season and now in hindsight to see with Kimi – I don't regard him as the best qualifier in the world. Of course, he's quick, but racing already back then was where he showed his strength. That's where he was really, really good, that's why he has so many quickest race laps compared to other drivers [46, third in the all-time list]. And that's what I remember very early on, that his racecraft was very high."

Both drivers continued to be in the mix to score consistently: "I think it was a bit of a new start for Sauber, having two new drivers on board, and things just worked out. It was great. That season for Sauber was very special."

It was after Raikkonen had finished a strong fourth in Montreal, and he chatted with Hakkinen and Dennis at a party on the Sunday night, that he began to move into the frame for a McLaren seat. The big hurdle was that he had a firm three-year contract with Sauber.

Expecting to be the first man that the Woking team called upon, a bemused Heidfeld heard the paddock rumours. In effect he had acted as a benchmark for Raikkonen. The perception was that Raikkonen was the coming man, even though they were evenly matched and Heidfeld would end 2001 with three more points.

"I remember that we first realised that Mika would retire in Monaco," recalls former McLaren boss Martin Whitmarsh. "Kimi was close to a podium in Canada. He hadn't had much car racing before that year, and therefore his performance in his rookie year was outstanding. He just shaded Nick, who of course we knew very well, having supported him in F3 and created an F3000 team for him."

Eventually a deal was done, and Peter Sauber received enough hard cash from McLaren to commission a new windtunnel in Hinwil.

"First of all, the relationship between Kimi and myself, it didn't change anything," Heidfeld insists. "He tried to get the drive, that's for sure. That's business, it didn't change anything at all."

"But it was not easy for me that McLaren took him on board, because of a couple of reasons. I thought I did a good job that season in comparison to Kimi, even though it was my second and it was his first year. And obviously because I was connected with McLaren for quite a while, and being a German driver I had a connection to Mercedes as well."

"Also because over the season I did have some contacts with certain people. And they told me I'm doing a good job, I'm doing everything right. And if there's a chance, I would be, let's say, at least considered. But then it didn't happen. So that was something I didn't like."

Heidfeld has a vivid memory of the Japanese GP, the final race of the year. "In Turn 2, Kimi was on my inside," he recalls. "And he pushed me a little bit wide. I remember that because, until that point, he was a super, super-fair guy, which you cannot say about everybody, and of all of my team-mates. Until then we always gave each other room, or more than enough room. But this being the last race of the season, and we're not in the same team anymore for 2002..."

"I'm pretty sure he was in control, which is also a nice thing to say about him compared to other drivers – that he knew what he was doing. And he also didn't push me off in a way that I would go off or spin, but enough for him to just get through. I didn't really feel bad about that, because that's something I would probably also have done, or most people would. But that was the first moment he ever did that to me, and it was the last race."

Heidfeld would enjoy a long F1 career, logging 13 podiums (the highest for a driver without a victory) from 183 starts, but he never joined a truly top team.

He insists that he didn't let the McLaren rejection get to him: "I believed in myself and I thought I would get the chance, but what I learned over the years, which is a bit different to what I assumed and expected, is that it's not only the normal fans that watch races from time to time, but even people inside F1, who don't have a perfect overview of what is happening. This is because most of the time they have to look so much on their own things that they don't focus on the drivers and all that's happening."

"And this is something that in hindsight I probably underestimated a little bit, that you need to advertise yourself and your driving a little bit more, so people would be aware."

What Heidfeld inadvertently did in 2001 was to help Raikkonen do that very thing. ■

SAUBER'S 2001 SEASON

RACE	HEIDFELD RESULT	RAIKKONEN RESULT
Australian GP	4	6
Malaysian GP	R	R
Brazilian GP	3	R
San Marino GP	7	R
Spanish GP	6	8
Austrian GP	9	4
Monaco GP	R	10
Canadian GP	R	4
European GP	R	10
French GP	6	7
British GP	6	5
German GP	R	R
Hungarian GP	6	7
Belgian GP	R	R
Italian GP	11	7
United States GP	6	R
Japanese GP	9	R
POINTS	12 (8th)	9 (10th)





Triumph over adversaries

The Dolomite Sprint was a potent giantkilling weapon during the 1970s in what is now known as the BTCC. How did it become such a force?

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

This was a time for Britain's touring car championship to go insular, to move away from the high-cost international regulations of the time towards an indigenous new ruleset. It led to an explosion in the number of manufacturers and car models on the grid, albeit with little in the way of factory representation, and a lot of drivers who were hardly household names.

No, we're not talking about the switch from Super 2000 to NGTC rules in the early 2010s. We're harking back, instead, to the rejection of Group 2 regulations in favour of Group 1½ for 1974.

One works team, albeit initially not on an overt basis, was British Leyland's Broadspeed-run Triumph Dolomite Sprint squad. The Dolomite would go on to be the class of the 2.5-litre division from 1974-78, and in the last two of those years would become a giantkilling



Sideways Rouse at Silverstone in 1974, leading Holman Blackburn's Capri and team-mate Dron

multiple overall race winner, humbling the predominantly Ford Capri-based top class. Yet somehow, when the lists of great cars from the history of the BTCC are drawn up, it rarely features.

Broadspeed founder Ralph Broad had done his homework. In the Group 2 era he was charged with running Ford's effort in the series. The youthful Andy Rouse was not only Broadspeed's competitions manager, but had won the 1600cc title in 1973 at the wheel of one of the team's Escorts. Broad was among those charged by governing body the RAC with coming up with a new set of regulations that would make the series more production-based.

According to Martin Thomas – who was known for his ability to write rules, had raced Group 2 Chevrolet Camaros, and was working with preparation ace Bill Shaw – the motive was to prevent the championship becoming too production based, against the backdrop of the Group 1-based Production Saloons category that had been introduced two years earlier by Brands Hatch impresario John Webb. "Ralph Broad, myself, the RAC and Bill Blydenstein [who ran Vauxhall's DTV team] actually formulated the rules, because we weren't going to allow 'Webby' to put in production cars as a national series supporting things such as the British Grand Prix," explains Thomas, who went on to be a class winner in the series in a Shaw-built Dolomite in 1976. "We said, 'No, come on, it's an international formula.' That's why it was called Group 1½ – the half was between 1 and 2!"

Broad had identified the Dolomite Sprint as a potent weapon and, after meetings with British Leyland MD John Barber, was given a contract in November 1973 to develop the car. "I remember when

we got the Dolomite Sprint for evaluation – it was chosen on the basis that it was the only 16-valve two-litre engine that was available at the time," recalls Rouse. "I was running the racing workshops at Broadspeed at the time, but when we delved into the 'Dolly' a bit further there were quite a few problems that needed to be fixed to make it into a good race car. There was all sorts of trickery that needed to be done."

In a production-based formula, that's easier said than done. In an ➤



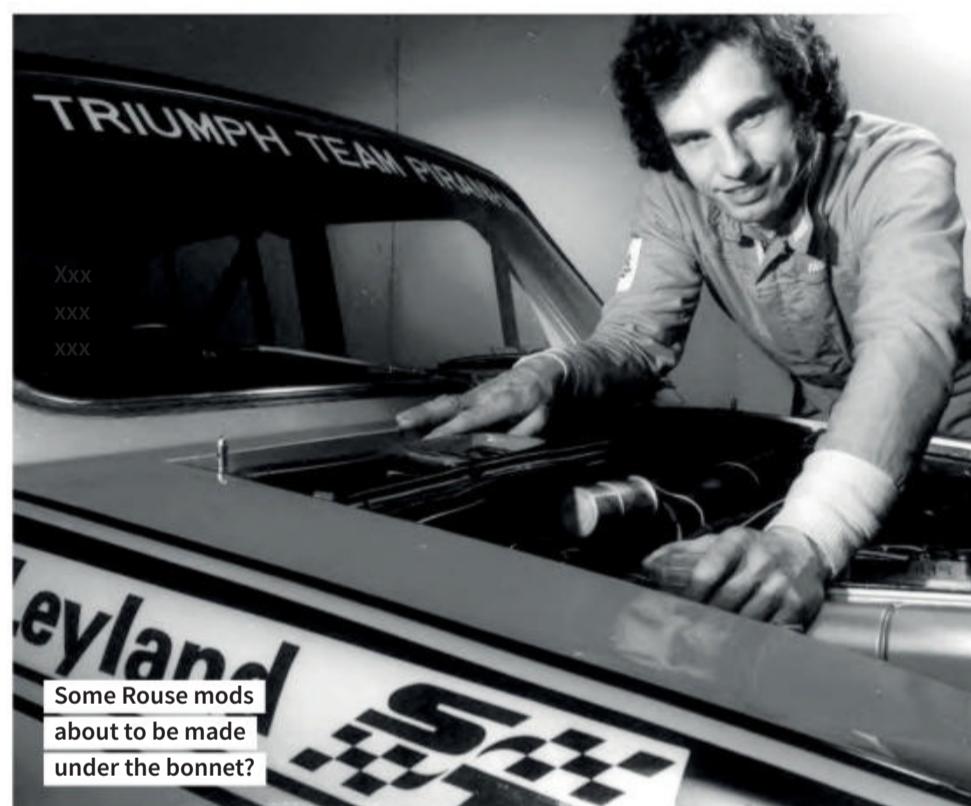
Rouse fends off Williams's Mazda on 'Dolly' debut at Mallory



Rouse even scared the big-banger Camaros in 1975 (Richard Lloyd chases)



Rouse gives chase to Brian Muir's Shaw-run car on way to dramatic title-clinching win at Brands



Some Rouse mods about to be made under the bonnet?



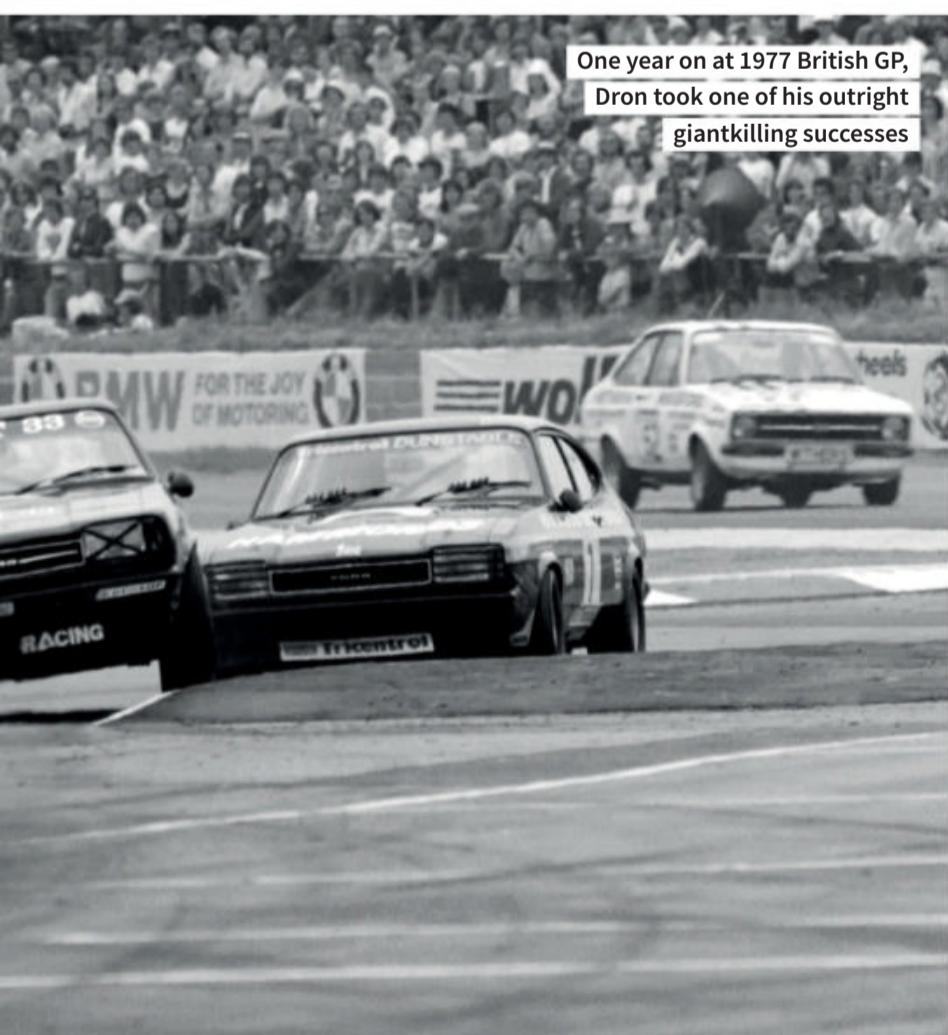
interview with Autosport's Ian Phillips in October 1974, Broad proudly proclaimed: "I can seriously say, with my hand on my heart, the Dolomite Sprint is the most legal car I have ever built in my life." He was referring to the car being within the spirit, as well as the letter, of the regulations, and then discussed the suspension format. "Obviously you cannot change the suspension, you must retain the same basic form, but when we first went testing we rose-jointed the whole lot to eliminate the flexibility that you get in the rubber bushes used on the standard car," continued Broad. "Then we gradually developed all the rubber suspension component parts, trying different stiffness and hardness of rubber. Eventually we were lapping within 0.5 seconds of the time using rose-joints. The regs state quite clearly that you cannot use rose-jointed suspension – it's illegal, even though some people do."

Today, when asked about how the handling problems of the standard Dolomite were cured, Rouse lets a very old cat out of the bag: "There were a few rose-joints hidden in the rubber bushes! That fixed that." Not just this, but "things like the rear wheelbearings wouldn't stand more than half a day's testing before they clapped out, so we hid another bearing down the axle tube, and that took the load off the outside bearing, and it would run OK then".

But what Rouse describes as "the best tweak on the car" was its overdrive function, which turned the Dolomite's gearbox from a four-speeder to five – and six when Rouse and team-mate Tony Dron contested the Spa 24 Hours on the old nine-mile layout. "We rigged it up so you could just flick the dip-beam switch on the left-hand column stalk, so we had like a paddle-shift," he says. "You just flicked the stalk and it changed gear, so you had first, second, third, overdrive third, which was effectively fourth, and into fourth which was fifth. That was a good tweak because you could powerslide it out of the corner and flick the switch, and it would change gear without you lifting off. It was way ahead of its time! On the road car it was on top of the gear knob. But on the dip switch you'd just flick it as your hand went by."

As beautifully illustrated by the photo of Rouse at Silverstone's Copse Corner, the Dolomite rewarded a sideways driving style. "It was always an oversteering car, because the front roll centre and the rear roll centre were vastly different," says Rouse. "The rear roll centre was very high, and that suited me well because I'd learned to drive on grass tracks. So I didn't mind if it oversteered, and that was the quickest way. Other people tried to set it up so it would understeer, but it was never as quick. You just had to learn to drive it and live with its foibles.

"The worst thing about the car was the brakes. It had a small single caliper on the front with a 10-inch solid disc, so we ended up cutting brake pads out of aeroplane brake pads. We used to buy those in, and cut them out to fit in the Dolomite Sprint, and instead of the disc being cast iron it was high-carbon steel, with holes and slots drilled in, so then the brakes would work reasonably well, but even so the fact that it had no brakes didn't handicap me really, because with grass track cars you never used the brakes – you just flicked it sideways and slowed down that way. So again, I didn't mind the fact that the



brakes were a bit iffy. I just drove around the problem."

There were teething problems with the overdrive from the very first race at Mallory. BL had a policy of partnering Rouse with a motoring journalist, and Dron, then struggling to break into a role befitting his aspirations as a race driver, got the role for 1974. He lay second to Rouse in that opening round when the overdrive played up and the 'box downshifted, buzzing the revs beyond 10,000 – way above the 8500rpm maximum for 175bhp from the blueprinted engine. Predictably, it exploded.

While Dron remembers the cure to this problem being to set the overdrive switch in a hard-setting gel, Rouse adds that "we probably put springs or something inside it". It still proved problematical, and Rouse was moved into Dron's car for the penultimate round at Snetterton when the overdrive failed completely in qualifying. Dron found that even without overdrive in the Rouse machine, he was catching his team leader when he suffered a puncture.

Rouse, with his main class opposition the Mazda RX3 of the spectacular but incident-prone Barrie Williams, went into the final round at Brands Hatch with a chance of his first outright British Saloon Car title. His opposition was Bernard Unett, whose hopes in the 1600cc class had received a boost when a 1.6-litre engine was homologated in place of the original 1500 unit in his Chrysler Avenger GT during the season. Rouse was battling to get away from Williams when he tried to pass Tom Walkinshaw's Ford Capri, from the class above, at Druids. But he slid off, hit the barrier, bent the suspension and then spun further down the order. That overall crown would have to wait.

Rouse remembers only "bigger SU carburettors, probably a better exhaust manifold, a few tweaks like that" for the 1975 season, where he notched up not only his third successive class title but also overall glory for the first time. To Dron's dismay, BL chose another journalist to pilot the sister car: Motor editor Roger Bell, who had raced an Avenger the previous season. Dron dropped into the small class, in an Alfa Romeo 1600 GT Junior, but that 1600cc division would be dominated by the Toyota Celica GT of Win Percy. So much so that, going into the final round, it would be Rouse versus Percy versus Stuart Graham, whose Chevrolet Camaro had cleaned up in the top class.

The Shaw-run Shellsport team, which had shown occasional strong form with John Hine in its Dolomite since early 1974, had drafted in Australian tin-top ace Brian Muir to replace Hine for the latter stages of the season. Muir defeated Rouse to win their class in the penultimate round at Oulton, meaning Rouse would have to take victory at the Brands finale to defeat Graham and Percy to the crown. Muir qualified on pole, before a discussion between Shaw, Broad and BL. "They wanted to get Triumph to win the championship," says Rouse. "There was an agreement made between those parties that I would win the race. But

"It was always an oversteering car. You just had to learn to drive it and live with its foibles"

Brian raced me hard for all 20 laps, and he was leading on the final lap."

Unfortunately, South African racecar magnate Bob Ridgard had spun his Camaro off at Clearways, and the Dolomites were approaching... "As we came to the last corner of the last lap the yellow flags were out. So I couldn't pass Brian. He lifted off and I was just alongside him on the start/finish line where the green flag was. It was a bit of a dicey moment there! Ralph had a word with the stewards so I got away with it without getting a penalty."

With the Camaros having dominated the previous two seasons as far as overall wins were concerned, an upper limit of 3000cc was imposed on the championship for 1976. That meant the Capris would now become numerically dominant in the top class, with the Dolomites and their opponents moving up to Class B. But Rouse had often blown away the Capris in 1975, and surely he now had a chance of outright success. BL also went the whole hog on declaring the factory presence, having >>

Exuberant Marshall
kerb-hops in 1979
at Donington



A DOLOMITE RESURFACES

Martin Thomas was surprised when the phone rang earlier this year. This veteran of British Saloon Car Championship driving, team-running, rulewriting, homologation expertise, historic preparation and authenticity checking was being told that the Triumph Dolomite Sprint he had raced in 1976 had resurfaced, and was on the market.

Thomas worked with Bill Shaw, and raced one of the Shaw-built cars in 1975. He then took the wheel of Shaw's former Shellsport Dolomite, raced by John Hine and Brian Muir in 1974-75, for the following season, and inherited class honours at Silverstone when Andy Rouse ran out of fuel on the final lap.

The contact came from The Market, the online auction house that has grown fast over its five-year history to the point where it is selling 90-100 cars per month. But Thomas was sceptical. "I sold it to an Italian chap who is a director of Illy coffee," he says of his 1976 Dolomite. "I don't know what he did with it in Italy. Then it got sold to a chap in Norfolk, and his company went bust. The chap that then took it had it in part lieu for the money he had lost within

the company. The car disappeared for a period of time, and then suddenly this Dolomite Sprint popped up. I questioned it, and I said 'bring it down'."

The car had adopted a BL livery at some time in the intervening 45 years, but Thomas was able to identify its ancestry partly from the engine built by Don Moore, who tuned all the Shaw-built Dolomites: "I looked down into the valve covers and it was definitely a Don Moore engine. Ralph [Broad] didn't do it, but Don used to hand-finish all his component parts, and it

was all hand-finished.

"It wouldn't take a lot to put the car back to what it was. If you threw 20 grand at it, or at the worst 30, which is not a lot of money on a car, you'd get it back to its spec."

The car went under the online hammer for £51,000 at The Market, the company founded by former Ford Motor Company engineer and Caterham Academy (and currently Citroen C1) racer Tristan Judge and technology expert Tim Joslyn. "We've been at it the longest in UK online auctions," says Judge. "It was done on the back of seeing

that transparency and openness is just not in the auction world, and this funny thing called the internet: there was an opportunity in the market and we put together the whole thing.

"It's all about presentation – not flashing lights and what have you, but pictures of every nook and cranny of the car. It doesn't matter where the buyer is – they know everything about it. Last year we sold £10million of cars, and we're a quarter of the fees of a physical auction house."

The Dolomite's lucky buyer is Matthew Sanders, who's been campaigning his BMW M3 E46 across various club series in recent years, and has already entered his new acquisition for September's Vallelunga Classic Peter Auto event.

"It's with a team called Amspeed, and we fundamentally want to put it back to how it was," says Sanders, who will restore the car to its Shellsport livery and share it with Goodwood chief instructor Jack Layton.

"They've started that journey, but we've only got 16 weeks! The car is all there, but it's rough and needs a bit of work."



Car needs some work,
but is set to race in September

hidden behind Castrol backing in 1974 and Piranha electronic ignition livery in 1975. (Of one Rouse performance at Thruxton in 1975, the late Robert Fearnall wrote in Autosport: "What a superb advert for BL products, if they took the trouble to notice!") Now the cars were in full white, red and blue BL livery, and motor dealer and ex-Formula 5000 ace Steve Thompson signed for the second seat.

Sure enough, Rouse battled the Capri of Gordon Spice for overall victory in the opening round at Brands, before his throttle pedal broke and jammed under the brake at Hawthorns with four laps remaining. Unsurprisingly, Rouse spun off. Next time out at Silverstone's International Trophy meeting, Rouse pursued the Capri of Walkinshaw (now being run by Bill Shaw) for the lead. When Walkinshaw's halfshaft broke, Rouse took the lead, and he was coasting to victory before he was... coasting to a halt on the final lap. "I was absolutely livid," bemoans Rouse. "It ran out of fuel at Stowe. There was some kind of confusion about who'd put fuel in the car and who hadn't. That was one of our bad days..."

Another battle with Walkinshaw, at the Easter Thruxton meeting, ended when the Dolomite's cam bucket broke. At the next Thruxton round, he took pole by a second but lost power, allowing Walkinshaw to win and consigning the Triumph to a class-winning second.

Ironically, the closest a Dolomite got to an overall victory against the Capris in 1976 was when Derek Bell was brought in mid-season in place of Thompson. At the British GP support round, most of the leading runners wilted in the heat, including Rouse (overheating clutch and gearbox), and Bell finished just 1.3s adrift of the fading Capri of Vince Woodman. Geoff Lees, then a promising F3 racer, was brought in for a couple of rounds, while Rouse's season fizzled out. Rather than fighting to beat the Capris, he was now scrapping with his main class opposition:

"There was some kind of confusion about who'd put fuel in the car and who hadn't"

Dave Brodie's RX3 and Gerry Marshall's Vauxhall Magnum. When Rouse's overdrive slipped (it was still causing problems...) at the Brands finale, Marshall took class honours in the race and the title.

While Rouse stepped up to Broadspeed's ill-fated European Touring Car Jaguar XJ12C project for 1977, Dron returned to the fold to drive the Dolomite in 1977-78, after a season in F3 with the Triumph-engined March. "It had quite an upgrade for next season, which included Weber carburettors, and I think it had a tubular exhaust manifold, and upgraded front brakes," says Rouse. "It was generally a much better car. He probably had about 20 or 30 horsepower more." And Dron delivered (see page 54).

Once the Broadspeed project ended, Marshall pulled together a deal to field a pair of Triplex-backed Dolomites in 1979 for himself and Rex Greenslade, run by Roger Dowson. But by now the car was left breathless by Walkinshaw's new baby, the Mazda RX7, and the season was marred by Marshall's horrific accident at Silverstone. With the RX7 having cleaned up in 1980-81 in the hands of Percy, Mazda pulled out for 1982 and only a bunch of privateers in outdated machinery were left in the class. Hamish Irvine was one, and he scored three class wins – and the division title – before the introduction of Group A rules for 1983 ended the contemporary lifespan of the Dolomite. It bowed out with 52 class wins to its credit. ■

The ex-Hine/Muir/Thomas Dolomite had disappeared



THE MARKET.CO.UK



The Dolomite as a Capri killer

Having topped a shootout test for the drive, Tony Dron rejoined the Broadspeed Triumph team for its one-car attack on the 1977 British Saloon Car Championship.

The two-litre machine was soon punching well above its weight...

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY



The Ford Capri is widely regarded as one of the finest saloon cars of the 1970s. Indeed, Autosport placed it second in our greatest British Touring Car list last year. After the hitherto dominant American V8s had been banished at the end of 1975, the Capri became the car to have, taking 61 overall victories before the Rover SD1 took control from 1982.

But the popular coupe wasn't unbeatable. As well as its drivers repeatedly and famously losing the overall crown to battlers in the smaller classes (who could score the same number of points within their own categories), the Capri found the going tough against one smaller-engined car in 1977.

Broadspeed-run and developed Triumph Dolomite Sprints had already scored plenty of successes, including the overall title for Andy Rouse in 1975, but their outright race victories had been restricted to the days when the smaller-capacity cars were split from the bigger machines.

In 1977, however, the combination of the Dolomite and Tony Dron stepped things up a notch. "The 1977 Dolomite Sprint felt vastly better than the model I had raced for the team back in 1974 and it was obviously very much quicker," recalls Dron, who got the drive in the one-car team by winning a shootout at Goodwood.

"Over the previous three years, it had benefited from a great deal of development and homologated parts, all of which made it faster

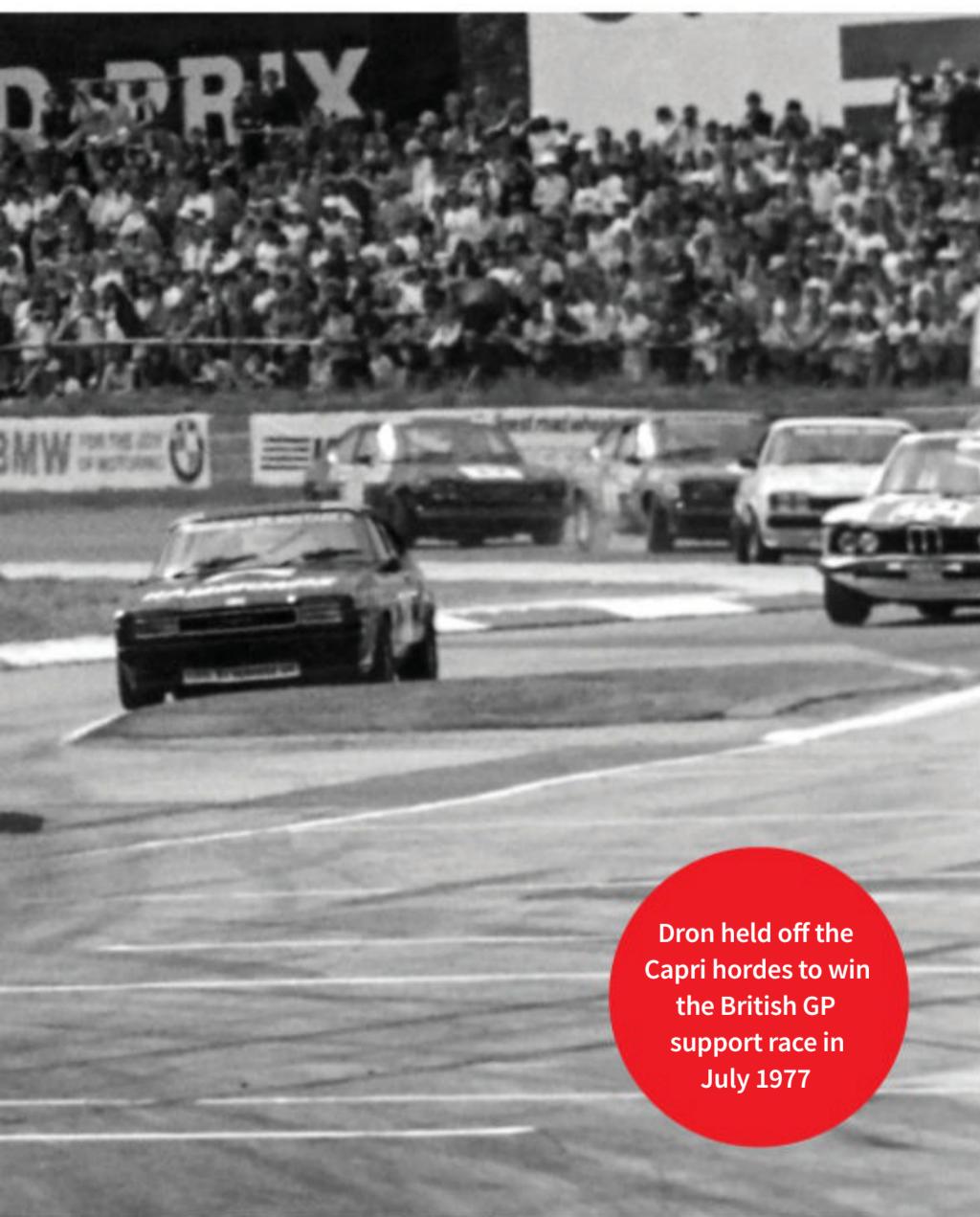




BLOXHAM

and stronger. There was a lot more power, about 200bhp in early 1977, and it had ventilated front disc brakes and a close-ratio four-speed gearbox. The handling had been developed by Andy Rouse, Broadspeed's in-house ace driver and engineer, and the car he had produced was excellent. The fact that our driving styles were quite different did not matter a bit."

Broadspeed boss Ralph Broad and Dron agreed that overall wins should be the target, even though the Dolomite 'only' had to top the 1601-2300cc Class B for maximum points. Dron would achieve six outright wins over the next year, becoming the only Dolomite driver to win BTCC races against the Group 1 Capri. Here's how he achieved those wins.



Dron held off the Capri hordes to win the British GP support race in July 1977

OULTON PARK 8 APRIL 1977

Dron had finished on the overall podium at both the Silverstone opening round and the subsequent Brands Hatch encounter. Oulton Park, venue for round three, suited the fine-handling Dolomite, and Dron took pole from Gerry Marshall's Class B Vauxhall Magnum.

"Chris Craft's Capri was third on the grid, the only Class A car on the front row, and he hounded me for six laps before getting by and opening a small gap," recalls Dron. Craft edged away, but halfway through the 20-lapper he fell back into Dron's clutches. "I learned later that he had ignition switch trouble and was having to drive with one hand so I got by," says Dron.

The Dolomite moved back ahead into a lead it would not lose,

"I was always very surprised that a journalist could be as good as he was!"

but Dron still had to work hard. Gordon Spice, up from sixth on the grid, harried him to the flag, finishing just 0.2 seconds behind. It was the Capri Mk2 horde's first defeat of the campaign.

"The Dolomite was more agile," recalls Spice. "Sometimes it was bloody quick. Tony was a very good driver, fair and a good chap. I was always very surprised that a journalist could be as good as he was!"

SILVERSTONE 16 JULY 1977

Dron was in contention for victory in a multi-car fight at Thruxton for round four, and was on leader Vince Woodman's bootlid going on to the final lap. The only problem was that Dron thought that was the end and backed off, eventually crossing the line seventh (in the pitlane): "Over 40 years on it's still a ghastly, blood-chilling memory. Never, in the next 34 years of racing, did I ever make that stupid mistake again."

A bad tyre choice forced upon him cost Dron the chance of victory at Silverstone's June race, while he was second and third at Thruxton and Donington respectively. Capris had won all four of those races, but the British Grand Prix support round at Silverstone would mark the start of a fine run for the British Leyland machine.

"I put both my race car and my T-car on pole in the Friday session, thanks to two sets of qualifying tyres," says Dron. "The times show just how good the Broadspeed team was: my best lap time in one car was 1m46.13s followed by 1m46.16s in my spare. I couldn't tell the two cars apart." ➤



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Thruxton was the scene
of both embarrassment
and success during 1977

The top eight runners were covered by 0.79s, and Dron knew that he would not be able to maintain his pole pace on race rubber. He immediately had a pack of Class A cars chasing him.

"Spice eased alongside and overtook me late on the second lap and I decided to stay very close, looking for chances all the time, but not slowing us both by making any moves to get back in front," explains Dron. "I expected Gordy to remain at ten tenths for some time without making a single error, which is exactly what he did for the next three laps."

"Then I sensed a slight change, not in his driving but in his car's attitude, and it dawned on me that his tyres were past their best. The difference amounted to no more than two or three tenths of a second per lap, but that was enough to change everything. I drew alongside him coming out of Stowe Corner and was back in front after some very late braking into Club."

"For the remaining 16 laps, I had to drive on the absolute limit nearly all the way. Every now and then I would see a Capri emerge from the pack and appear to close on me just a little. For lap after lap, I was sure that one of them would be able to close the gap but it never happened. Each Capri in turn, after three unhindered laps on my tail, would sink back into the mob of cars a few yards behind, and I was hugely relieved to be leading by nearly 12s when the chequered flag fell. My tyres had held up well for the entire distance."

"It's hard to convey the pressure of racing like that in front of a horde of well-driven, powerful cars in very close pursuit all the way. They were from the class above mine and all were potentially faster than I was. Had any one of them been free to hunt me down without interference from rivals, I reckoned I would have lost that race. And had I made one tiny mistake I would have been swallowed up by the lot of them."

"Having pole position, thanks to qualifying tyres that took 0.55s off my best time on race tyres that day, made all the difference."

"One of the most exciting Group 1 races so far this season," reckoned Autosport.

1977 BSCC STATS

DRIVER	WINS	POLES
Tony Dron	5	7
Gordon Spice	2	3
Stuart Graham	2	0
Colin Vandervell	1	1
Chris Craft	1	0
Vince Woodman	1	0
Tom Walkinshaw	0	1





DONINGTON PARK 7 AUGUST 1977

The revived Donington hadn't initially been too kind to Dron in 1977. He'd had brake issues in the July round, before suffering an enormous testing crash when the brakes failed completely approaching the Old Hairpin.

"It was a very heavy impact," says Dron of the 90mph contretemps with a concrete wall. "It was unbelievably painful. The main bone in my lower right leg had a couple of hairline fractures from the impact with my heel, and it was six weeks before I could walk again."

Amazingly, that didn't stop him taking pole and leading that weekend's 15-lap race throughout, making Autosport's cover in the process (above).

"Luck was with me because the man next to me, Stuart Graham, had some sort of clutch trouble at the start," remembers Dron. "That delayed him and several others behind, leaving me with a free run. I was able to maintain a lead of two to four seconds."

"One thing about that race is that my ankle stopped hurting, if only for the duration of the race. The normal adrenalin build-up saw to that before the start."

Dron came home 2.6s clear of Craft, with Tom Walkinshaw's BMW 530i making it two non-Capris on the podium.

The experience also provided an interesting lesson for Dron: "As it was my right ankle that was damaged, normal driving was not possible. The pain had gone but the joint felt like warm jelly when I put my foot on the brake pedal. There was very little strength in it and I had to adapt to braking very much earlier than usual."

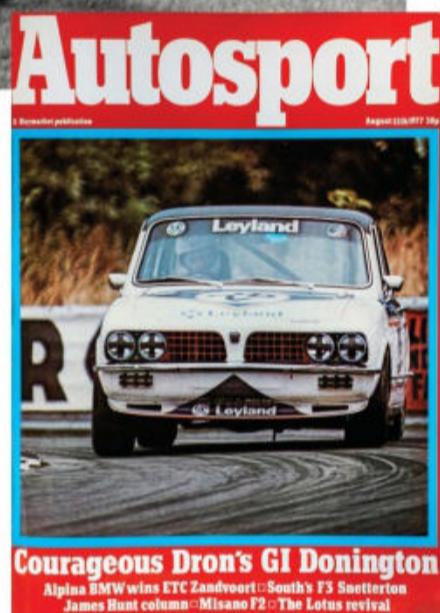
"In the first Donington race that year, I had done 1m25.4s. This time, instead of being slower with a defective right ankle, I went a fraction faster, 1m25.2s. It wasn't a big difference but it was significant and it made me think. I was well aware of the need to avoid late braking to achieve quick lap times, but it was astonishing that it could be taken that far."

BRANDS HATCH 29 AUGUST 1977

Dron had now taken two outright wins on the trot and, thanks to his class domination, was well-placed to take the BSCC title against up-to-1300cc class leader Bernard Unett (Chrysler Avenger).

The Dolomite took pole by 0.8s at the Brands Hatch GP circuit round "thanks to our qualifying tyres" and dominated the event.

"Even with a couple of three-litre Capris beside the two-litre Dolomite on the front row of the grid, Dron still got to Paddock >>



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Dron thrashed the field in the wet at Silverstone in 1978 but knew the tables had turned

Hill Bend first – and that's where he stayed," reported Autosport. "One of his easiest wins of the season."

Dron opened a useful gap on the opening tour and led throughout the 20 laps, finishing 10.6s clear of Colin Vandervell's Capri. It wasn't a good day for the V6 Fords as the Vauxhalls of Marshall and Jeff Allam – Dron's class 'rivals' – finished fourth and fifth overall.

Unett, however, won his class again too, leaving him two points ahead of Dron with two rounds to go.

THRUXTON 11 SEPTEMBER 1977

Dron continued his fine run at Thruxton, though this was a tougher contest. Despite the Dolomite taking yet another pole, the race appeared to be going the way of Spice – soon to establish himself as the king of the Capri runners – until the closing moments.

"This really was the saloon car race to end all saloon car races," enthused Autosport. Dron fell to third at the start, with Spice fifth. But both soon made progress, reaching second and third as they chased after early leader Graham's Capri.

As the battle raged behind, Graham looked set to win before a clash with Unett during lappery caused him to spin. Spice, who had already overcome Dron, now hit the front, but he could not escape. And drama on the final lap helped the Dolomite to its fifth win of the year.

"I only managed that because Gordy slowed strangely in the middle of the chicane, the last corner on the last lap, which allowed me to slip past him by darting over the kerb," explains Dron. "It seemed odd because he did slow down quite a lot and it was only when I swerved to avoid him that I saw, and seized, my unexpected chance. He was pretty annoyed about that and he put in a protest against my driving, which the stewards rejected."

Spice can't now recall why he slowed at the chicane but suggests "it was obviously a cock-up".

The result set up a title showdown at Brands Hatch, something familiar to BTCC fans in the 21st century. Dron again beat the Capris to overall pole, but there was to be no happy ending.

"Thanks to our qualifying tyres, I took overall pole by the even bigger margin of 1.1s," says Dron. "At last, about 10 weeks after the accident, the pain in my ankle had almost gone completely and things were looking good. Those Dunlop qualifying tyres were absolute magic and they worked every single time we used them. The drill was to get the car perfectly set up on race tyres and clock the best possible time on them first. Then, in the closing minutes, we'd get the qualifiers on and crack in one on-the-limit killer lap."

Dron was engulfed by Capris at the start, and working through the pack this time proved a real challenge: "The Capris seemed to be on better form and I found myself stuck in a big bunch of them for the first few laps. As Spice and Craft pulled comfortably away from the group, I soon realised that an outright win was clearly impossible. However, I soon had a huge lead in class, and by the middle of the race I was happily hammering round all on my own. It seemed that all I had to do was to keep going to score maximum points in that race, which would almost certainly make me the British Saloon Car champion of 1977."

But just after half distance, Dron detected a strange feeling with the steering and realised there was something amiss with the left-rear tyre. "I nursed it as best I could on the right-handers but the damage was done," he adds. "As that tyre steadily fell apart, I found myself going ever more sideways, at much reduced speed.

"With about three laps to go, I spotted the nose of a silver Vauxhall Magnum in the distance behind me, one of the two Blydenstein-prepared works cars, gaining rapidly."

It was Allam, who forced Dron to spend the final miles trying to hold the Vauxhall off. He managed until Clearways, the last corner of the final race of the season.

"My left rear was completely shot by then and so, with great chunks of tread flying off it, I went through that corner on nearly full opposite lock at a painfully slow speed while still trying my best to make myself into an obstacle," he says. "It was hopeless, and Allam slipped past very easily and beat me to the finish line by less than a second."

"In the pits, I looked at the rear left tyre: all the tread had gone completely from the centre, leaving visible fabric and mere strands of tread mix all round the edges. I was surprised that it hadn't blown but, incredibly, it hadn't deflated at all."

"As I stood there, I couldn't understand why it had failed. Then [mechanic] Vic Drake confessed: while I was away having a cup of tea between qualifying and the race, Ralph Broad had instructed him to go one grade softer with the slicks on each corner of the car, without telling me."

"We had a range of slick tyres, from very soft to quite hard, and one of Vic's jobs was to monitor tyre temperatures in qualifying and pick the right one for each corner of the car for the race. Vic always got it right, which in the end meant only one thing: had Ralph stayed at home that day we would have won the championship."

As it was, Dron finished third in the overall table as class champion. He had won more races – five – than anyone else.



“With all four wheels riding on top of the water, any use of the steering did absolutely nothing”

SILVERSTONE 19 MARCH 1978

Dron was decidedly unhappy with suspension modifications made for 1978, but in the wet opening round at Silverstone he dominated from pole. “The circuit was dry in qualifying, and on my one super-quick lap on the trick qualifying tyres I picked up an ideal slipstreaming tow from Craft’s Capri, all along the Hangar Straight, through Stowe and Club Corners and through the fast left sweep at Abbey,” says Dron. “That tow made me faster on those straights than I had ever gone before, giving me pole over Spice in the quickest of the new Capris.”

Nevertheless, Dron knew that the Capris, some of which were now Mk3 models, had made a step forward for 1978. The tow, combined with rain on race day, gave him a chance that would not come again.

“There were huge puddles and I have never seen Silverstone quite that wet before or since,” reckons Dron. “Because of the atrocious conditions, the race was shortened to 15 laps [from 20] and they gave us an unprecedented three warm-up laps before forming us up on the grid. Approaching Becketts on the first of those warm-up laps, and studying the other leading cars in those dangerous conditions, my Dolomite felt quicker than any of them. It felt like a winner, but it would have been so easy to go off and crash heavily, which many did in that race.”

“At the start, Spice and I took off as one but I slipped into the



lead as I had the inside line at Copse, and from then on my car was so good that it simply disappeared into the distance to win the race by the incredible margin of 22.68s.

“Those conditions demanded some unusual driving tricks, especially at the super-fast Abbey Curve, where there was one enormous lake. On the warm-up laps I had worked out what was needed: turn in late, head dead straight at the lake as fast as possible and then aquaplane through it in an absolutely straight line at undiminished speed for 200 yards. It was important to line it up precisely straight for that and then ease back on the throttle enough to avoid overrevving with wheelspin. With all four wheels riding on top of the deep water, any use of the steering did absolutely nothing until the aquaplaning stopped, at which point the car made contact with the road again and just carried straight on as if nothing had happened. It was a pretty weird feeling and the only time in 43 years of racing that I had to do anything quite like that, but on the first lap alone that one trick at Abbey opened up an even vaster gap over the rest of the field. Soon I couldn’t see anybody behind me.”

Autosport’s reporter Ian Phillips was impressed: “It’s difficult to eulogise about the performance as it was as unspectacular as it was efficient – complete mastery of the conditions. He must have been the only man in the race not to spin.”

Under the circumstances it’s perhaps easy to see why others didn’t take Dron’s warnings of the improved Capri pace seriously. “Ralph was delighted at our result and did not believe me when I told him privately, immediately after the race, that we’d been incredibly lucky,” says Dron. “The new Capris were so quick, I told him, that we’d be unlikely to get another outright win against them that season. He huffed and puffed and changed the subject, but that was indeed our last outright win with a Dolomite Sprint.”

The Capris went on to dominate, with only Walkinshaw’s BMW ending the run in the season finale at Oulton Park. “We switched to Goodyear for 1978,” remembers Spice. “They were on a pace with Dunlops but didn’t degrade. Ford also realised they didn’t have anything else that was going to win races so started to take the Capri a bit more seriously and homologate parts we needed.”

Dron nevertheless dominated his class again and was in overall title contention until Spice, Dron and Class C ace Richard Lloyd lost their Donington wins and Class D Mini driver Richard Longman became champion. Dron still secured the class title, but his time in the Dolomite – and the Triumph’s chance of taking overall victories – was finished by the end of 1978. The Capri would now have things all its own way until the arrival of the 3.5-litre Rover V8. ■

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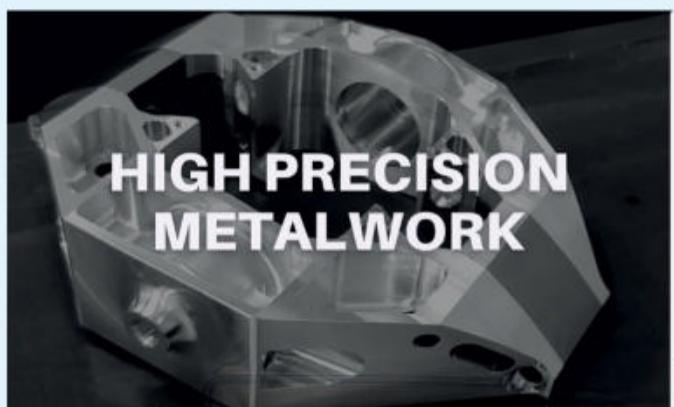
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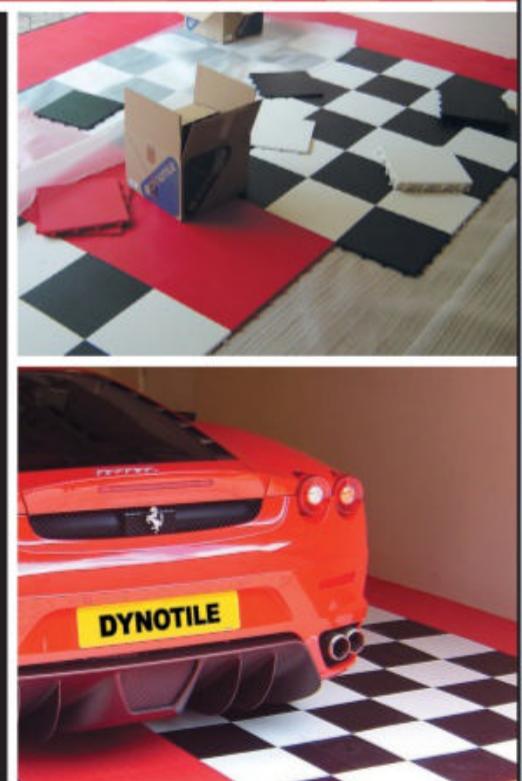
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TRIBUTES TO POPULAR MR2 DRIVER NICHOLLS

OBITUARY

Tributes have been paid to Toyota MR2 Championship stalwart Mick Nicholls, who died suddenly last week of a suspected heart attack during testing at Cadwell Park.

The 71-year-old, a fixture of the MR2 category alongside son Stuart and daughter Maxine for more than 10 years, was preparing for the opening round of the season in his MR2 Roadster when he pulled off the circuit during testing on Friday. He was attended to promptly by the circuit's medical staff and the air ambulance, but died at the scene.

Nicholls began competing in the championship after his son started to race, and was ever present alongside his wife, Diane. The family's cars were prepared by Rogue Motorsport, whose managing director Patrick Mortell is also coordinator of the MR2 Championship and had known Nicholls for his entire time in the category.

"Mick lived for the social side of things," said Mortell, "I think he was just as happy in the paddock socialising with people as he was out racing. He

would race hard, but he liked to think that he was fair and, if he was involved in a collision with somebody, he would always go and talk with them about it afterwards.

"The thing that stands out was he'd go to every awards evening and the highlight for him was getting up on the stage at some point, grabbing the microphone and belting out *Mustang Sally*, which he seemed to do at every single awards event."

A tribute from the 750 Motor Club, which operates the MR2 Championship, said: "Our thoughts are with Stuart, Maxine, Diane and the rest of Mick's family at this time. Mick was a long-standing and popular competitor with the 750 Motor Club, who had achieved a great deal of success over the years racing primarily in the Toyota MR2 Championship but also RoadSports and Club Enduro and was a regular and enthusiastic Birkett Relay entrant.

"He was a strong competitor on track and a gentleman off it and his loss will be deeply felt throughout the paddock."

Mortell added he would be keen to honour Nicholls's memory, and will have discussions with his family about what would be appropriate. "From an MR2 Championship point of view I'd like to have some award that reflects an aspect of Mick's contribution to our championship," he added. "Mick was into golf, socialising, holidays, he was always doing something and yet his Facebook is just full of his motorsport, his racing. Even though I know how much motorsport the family do, I'm only really just beginning to realise just how deeply it had become part of the fabric of what they did."

Autosport sends its condolences to Nicholls's family and friends.

STEFAN MACKLEY



Revolutions to support F1 at Italian GP

REVOLUTION TROPHY

The Revolution Trophy and Sports Prototype Cup is to play a supporting role to the Formula 1 World Championship for a second time, on this occasion at the Italian Grand Prix.

The series will visit Monza on 11-12 September this year, where the two races are open to the Revolution A-One prototype race cars.

This will be the second appearance for the series on the F1 support bill, after it appeared at the Portuguese Grand Prix last season.

Sports Prototype Cup promoter James Bailey said: "We're thrilled to confirm a return to the Formula 1 paddock for Sports



Prototype Cup and the Revolution Trophy. Our debut Formula 1 support race last year was a resounding success and brought the Revolution A-One to new audiences.

"Adding Monza to the calendar provides our customers with a rare opportunity to race on one of the most famous grand prix tracks in the world, in front of the 'tifosi' on a Formula 1 weekend."



Ushijima back with Hitech GP in F3

BRITISH F3

Reece Ushijima will continue in the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship for the 2021 season, which will be his second with Hitech GP.

The 18-year-old finished 11th in the standings in his rookie season last year, with a best result of two second places, one at Donington Park and the other in a reversed-grid race at Brands Hatch.

The California-born Ushijima will partner Bart Horsten, also back for his second season in British F3, and 2019 British F4 runner-up

Sebastian Alvarez, who was due to appear in the championship last year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic altering his plans.

Ushijima also competed with Hitech in the 2021 Asian F3 Championship, finishing 12th in the standings and third in the rookie rankings.

"I'm thrilled to be back for another season of British F3 with Hitech GP," he said. "The team and I had a strong season last year where I personally learned a lot, and this year I'm ready to put all of that to practice. Super-grateful for the opportunity and can't wait to get the season started."

COATES JOINS GRAVES TEAM FOR MINI CAMPAIGN

MINI CHALLENGE

Mini Challenge race winner Max Coates will join Bradley Gravett at Graves Motorsport this season as the squad steps up to the JCW class for the first time.

Coates was sixth in the standings in his rookie campaign in Minis with Elite Motorsport last season, having been a Renault UK Clio Cup title contender in the previous two years. He says Graves's aim to join the British Touring Car grid in the future was key to attracting him to join the squad.

"I did an interview with My Super Car, and Karl [Graves, team boss] listened to that and heard I wasn't signed up for a team this year and it stemmed from that," said Coates. "I got to find out a bit more about them and it went from there."

"They have ambitions to go to touring cars and so do I. That's probably the biggest draw, but also I would be team-mates with Bradley and get to work with Robb Gravett, which is very cool as he's someone with a lot of contacts. They're a family team, which I like and that resonates with me a lot."

Coates (below) had targeted a BTCC drive for this season but, after being unable to secure the budget, says "it was between Mini Challenge and the Ginetta GT4 Supercup", and he opted for Minis after speaking to Graves.

Bradley Gravett, son of 1990 BTCC champion Robb, made his car racing debut in the Cooper class of the Mini Challenge last year, and took a best result of sixth.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Trundley and Morgan are set to race McLaren in 2022



Team BRIT plans step up to British GT4 for next season

BRITISH GT

Team BRIT is set to take the next step towards its long-term goal of competing in the Le Mans 24 Hours by moving up to race in British GT next season.

The squad, which aims to provide opportunities for disabled people in motorsport, plans to run a McLaren 570S GT4 in British GT in 2022 for drivers

Bobby Trundley and Aaron Morgan. The duo spent last year racing an Aston Martin Vantage GT4 in the Britcar Endurance Championship and will again compete with the car in the series this season.

Trundley, who has autism, was previously a race winner in the 116 Trophy before stepping up to the Aston.

"British GT is the pinnacle of GT racing in the UK and I'm really looking forward

to be competing with such big names and manufacturers," said Trundley, who has also starred in British GT's Esports Championship. "I'm buzzing about it and proud to be racing with the team and helping them grow. This season's aim is to go out of Britcar with a bang and try and bring in some great results."

Former Compact Cup racer Morgan, who is paralysed from the waist down following a motocross crash as a teenager, added: "It's really exciting. It's amazing to be part of a team that never rests on their laurels and is always looking to improve and look at the next step on the motorsport ladder.

"If you had told me 15 years ago, when I was lying in my hospital bed thinking 'why me?', that I would now be on the brink of competing in British GT – it's been an unbelievable journey and I'm incredibly proud of how far I've come."

Team BRIT founder Dave Player has described the step to British GT as "huge news". "One of my proudest moments in the history of Team BRIT was purchasing our Aston Martin, which meant we took a step further into seriously competitive racing," he said.

"To now be ready to move on to British GT is testament to the incredible hard work of the team, our sponsors and our drivers, who I know will do everything possible to make this a success."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Extra GT4 Rocket RJN McLaren for Collard and Kell

BRITISH GT

Jenson Team Rocket RJN will expand its British GT line-up to run a third McLaren 570S GT4 this season, with 2020 GT4 runner-up Jordan Collard among its drivers.

The Bob Neville-run squad co-owned by 2009 Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button is stepping down from GT3 in 2021 to run two cars for McLaren's Driver Development Programme (DDP), which

was put on hiatus in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Its additional GT4 machine will be campaigned by ex-Speedworks Toyota driver James Kell and former DDP member Collard, son of 2020 GT3 champion Rob, and a two-time winner last season for HHC Motorsport alongside Patrik Matthiesen.

The 20-year-old could have won the title without a blowout that forced his retirement at Brands Hatch, a two-hour race carrying premium points.

"I have no doubt we have a great line-up to be able to fight hard for this championship," said Neville.

Meanwhile, fellow McLaren squad Balfe Motorsport will enter a GT4 car in addition to the 720S GT3 that it will run for father-and-son pairing Stewart and Lewis Proctor. Ashley Marshall graduates from the Ginetta GT5 Challenge, and will share with former Ferrari Challenge racer Jack Brown.

JAMES NEWBOLD



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Caterham Graduates thrillers end with honours shared

BARC

Harry Senior and Ben Winrow were both winners in two cut-and-thrust Caterham Sigmax/Sigma 150 races as the British Automobile Racing Club season began at Oulton Park last weekend.

Senior led from the start of race one, leaving Simon Griffiths and Winrow duelling for second. After Winrow had hauled their fight back onto the leader's tail, he led into Knickerbrook on lap nine of 11. Both Senior and Griffiths found their way past again a lap later, taking the flag only 0.419 seconds apart.

It was anyone from three for the majority of race two, with Senior and Griffiths alternating for the lead almost every lap. After Winrow split them on lap

six, all three swapped and changed, until Winrow got a late break to seal the win.

Simon Shaw led the Sigma 135s from the start, with David Read and Chris Skillicorn taking the battle for second down to the wire, Read just edging it. Only 0.494s covered the top four in race two, but James McCall nosed clear at the flag.

Former CNC Heads Sports/Saloons champion Paul Rose was a dominant winner in his Saker, having battled his way ahead of Jon Woolfitt's Spire and Paul Dobson's Locost in the opening tours. Woolfitt retained a clear second, with Dobson, having lost third to the MG Midget of Andrew Southcott, reclaiming the place a lap from home when his rival ran out of fuel.

PETER SCHERER

Dodd impresses on FF2000 debut

HISTORIC FF2000

Junior racing graduate Molly Dodd made an impressive Historic Formula Ford 2000 debut in a Royale RP27 at last weekend's season-opening meeting at Snetterton.

The 18-year-old from Spalding, who cut her car racing teeth in the Junior Saloon Car series before switching to the Ginetta Junior category, qualified 16th in a 30-car field and

ran combatively before a split crankshaft oil seal forced retirement from Saturday's race. It was repaired for her to start Sunday's sequel from the back, in which she climbed to 17th before retiring.

Remarkably, Dodd had not sat in a single-seater, or used a Hewland gearbox, until Friday's test day, when she acclimatised to the ex-Andrew Storer car, gaining pace with every session.

"I had done a few laps in

a friend's Mallock but the Royale is very different [from what she'd raced before], a great experience," she said.

Dodd is a second-generation racer, her father Julian competing with the Historic Sports Car Club a few years back, sharing a Historic Road Sports TVR Griffith with Matthew Truelove. "We still have the car, and plan to bring it out again this year," said Dodd Sr.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

COMBER'S MA7DA MOVE

One-time Locost champion and Mazda MX-5 regular Mike Comber will join the Ma7da grid this year and make occasional MX-5 Cup outings. Comber has bought a Locost from Richard Bradley and is upgrading it with the requisite Mazda engine. Michael Comber Racing will continue to field cars in the British Racing & Sports Car Club's MX-5 Championship but Comber, who was third last year, will step down from driving.

SHEPHERD'S DOUBLE PLAN

Murray Shepherd is planning a full campaign in Classic Formula Ford 2000 this season in the Van Diemen RF82 of Anthony Hancock. Shepherd is the son of AC Cobra racer Andy and won the Locost title in 2020. "I hope to do a full season in both FF2000 and Locost," said Shepherd, who has won all four Classic FF2000 races so far this year. "There are no clashes, so I can try and win both championships. I'd like to get into the top five of the Autosport driver rankings and give Cam Jackson a run for his money."

FOUR WHEELS FOR SIRRELL

Sidecar racer Rob Sirrell, 62, made his four-wheeled debut in Historic FF2000 at Snetterton last weekend in a Reynard SF78. The ex-David Wild car is prepared by his former 750 Motor Club F4 racer son Oly, who plans to break a multi-year layoff at Donington Park next month. Oly's wife Jennifer, another F4 frontrunner before their daughters were born, is also champing at the bit to return.

OLYMPIC YEAR FOR SMITH

Essex historic racer Nick Smith brought a rorty Rochdale Olympic (below) out at Snetterton, competing as an invitee in Saturday's Historic Road Sports event, then Sunday's Ecurie Classic Racing enduro in which the combo circulated with Mike Lamplough's equally rare Gilbern GT. Smith's best result over the weekend was 13th in Road Sports.





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Jordans and Colburns among packed Mini 7 grids

MINI 7 RACING CLUB

Former British GT champion Mike Jordan is set to join his son Andrew in competing with the Mini 7 Racing Club this season, while the Colburn family is also among the packed entry list.

Andrew Jordan made a handful of appearances in the Mini Miglia series in 2020 after his drive with the BMW-backed West Surrey Racing British Touring Car squad fell through. He took two wins and enjoyed the racing, and that has encouraged his father Mike to join the Mini Se7en grid later this year.

"When we first started building historic cars in 2014, it was easy for Andrew and me to do historic racing because we didn't have many customers," said Jordan Sr. "Since then, we've got busier and busier so it's harder to race because, at most historic meetings, we've got six-plus cars out."



Richard Colburn will drive
Mini he raced in the 1980s

"Andrew said, 'Do you wish you were racing more?', and then a month later he said, 'I've bought you a Mini Se7en'. It's a really old car and needed a bit of a tidy-up, so we'll probably make Silverstone or Cadwell Park onwards [round three or four]. I'm under no illusions – it's going to be very competitive – but I'm really excited about it!"

Three members of the Colburn family are also set to race with the club. Westbourne boss Richard Colburn began competing in Mini Miglias in the 1980s before leaving the series in 1992. After a couple of outings last season, he is now back in his original

car, which is entered in the Libre class. His sons, former Clio Cup racers James and Ben, will be in Miglias.

"The racing is always really exciting because of the slipstreaming and there's some really good drivers in it too," said Colburn Sr, who initially built his car when he was a teenager. "Both of the boys had a drive in my car and really enjoyed it and we took it from there."

Around 60 entries have been received across the club's four categories for this weekend's Silverstone opener.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

MG Trophy ace Ross switches to left-hand drive

MG CAR CLUB

Double MG Trophy champion Graham Ross is set to become the first driver to race a left-hand-drive car in the series in the Brands Hatch opener this weekend.

Ross bought a couple of left-hand-drive shells a few years ago and was initially planning to

convert one to right-hand drive as a winter project, before deciding to create the unique MG ZR 190.

"Right-hand-drive shells are very rare now, so I bought them [LHD] and always had the intention of converting one to right-hand drive, in case I needed a spare shell," said Ross, who believes the switch in configuration

could marginally improve the weight distribution at the front of the car.

"I spoke to Paul Luti [former runner-up] and he said, 'Why don't you keep it left-hand drive?' I thought to myself, 'Why not? Let's do it and see what happens.'"

Ross has conducted a brief test with the car at a Scottish airstrip and now

plans to use Friday's Brands test to get used to driving on the other side.

"It will all go swimmingly until I'm in the heat of battle and I will go to change gear and open the door!" said Ross, who is looking forward to a return to racing after sitting out the coronavirus-shortened 2020 season.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

ANGELO R. DRIVE

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NEAL TRIES RALLYCROSS Three-time British Touring Car champion Matt Neal is evaluating a foray into rallycross this year, following a test in an electric Supercar at Lydden Hill. The 54-year-old is taking a sabbatical from racing in the BTCC this year and last week tested a four-wheel-drive, 450kW Ford Fiesta ERX machine at the Kent venue. "It was pretty eye-popping," said Neal. "It impressed me how driveable it was, and how agile the car felt – no less so than a petrol car. It's certainly whetted my appetite and opened my eyes." **Photograph by Dan Bathie**

IN THE HEADLINES

HILLCLIMBERS IN ACTION

Four top British Hillclimbers were in action at the Midland Automobile Club Sprint at Curborough last weekend, as they prepare for the championship opener at Loton Park next month. There was a dramatic conclusion as Will Hall's Force crashed heavily at the flying finish, when a nose fin buckled underneath and the car became airborne. "I lost part of the nose when it bottomed out and for a while I thought it was going over," he said. Hall had set a possible best time of 48.55s, but hit a penalty marker, earning a penalty that gave Trevor Willis's OMS victory.

PRINCE PHILIP TRIBUTES

Race meetings paused for a minute's silence at 3pm last Saturday in tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh, to coincide with his funeral. Among the marks of respect paid over the weekend, three Lotus Elites prepared by Roy Gillingham of Performance in Motorsport carried black 'armbands' above the front wheel arch (below) for the Fifties Sports Car Racing contest at Silverstone.



Village returns to 750 Formula

HISTORIC 750F

Top Formula Ford 1600 driver John Village made a winning return to 750 Formula racing at Cadwell Park at the weekend – 46 years after last competing in it.

Village's 'JV2' led its very first laps in race one of the Historic 750 Formula Series before he settled for second, but he won race two as chief rivals Richard Prior (JGS) and Christian Pedersen (Austin 7) retired.

It was the first win around Cadwell in

any category for 67-year-old Village, the European FF1600 champion in 1979.

"I've not had a chance to do any set-up so I'm well chuffed with that," said the Baslow racer, who last competed in FF1600 in an ex-Richard Morgan Crossle 25F in 2019.

"I've still got the Crossle, but I'll most likely stick with this category – I've not raced 750 since 1975 and it's nice and relaxed. I'm just here for the craic."

CARL McKELLAR

Scottish karter Grant wins JSCC scholarship prize

JUNIOR SALOON CARS

Scottish karter Chloe Grant will step up to car racing this season after being selected as the Junior Saloon Car Championship's scholarship driver.

The 15-year-old impressed in a number of fitness, media and driving assessments at the Stafford Driving Centre last week to beat competition from 24 other drivers to secure the funded season in the JSCC. She had previously made history last year when she became the youngest person

to pass their junior ARDS test in Scotland aged 13.

Grant is now straight in at the deep end, with the opening JSCC event taking place at Cadwell Park this weekend.

"If we didn't win this scholarship, we most likely wouldn't have been doing Junior Saloon Cars this year, so it's unbelievable – I get to move into a car a year earlier than I planned to," she said. "My plan is for this to be a learning year and build up sponsorship so we can continue with the JSCC next year."



"My older sister Lucy is 24 and when she was 14 or 15 she saw the Ayrton Senna movie and was inspired to start racing. So, from a very

early age I had seen her racing and I grew up around it all. When I was seven, I asked my dad if I could get a kart."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Tilley, leading, held off Smith in the second Classic F3 encounter



Smith and Tilley share Classic F3 spoils

**SNETTERTON
HSCC
17-18 APRIL**

Polesitters won 17 out of the 19 races at the Historic Sports Car Club's season-opener on Snetterton's 300 circuit and, while some encounters were hard-fought, only in the final event on each day was the starting advantage overturned.

Benn Tilley's Classic Formula 3 victory over fellow March driver Andy Smith on Saturday was superbly crafted and the pick on a sunny spring weekend. Smith had scythed three seconds from the lap record in race one, posting a 1m53.874s in his March 783. "I was over the limit about six times on that lap, sideways everywhere,"

he grinned, as Tilley (March 743) and Tony Hancock (Lola T670) had no answer.

Nonetheless, they got ahead of Smith in the second start, his suspension setting changes having cost him traction. Tilley seized the lead from Hancock at Riches on lap two, and Smith grabbed second in the same spot next time round. Thereafter, the race was on.

"Andy's car was getting bigger and bigger in my mirrors, but I knew exactly where to place mine," said Benn, who didn't put a wheel wrong under immense pressure to triumph by 0.215s. Murray Shepherd claimed URS Formula Ford 2000 class honours both times in Hancock's Van Diemen RF82.

Startline marshals could have stencilled 'reserved for Cameron Jackson' into the P1 grid slot, for he started there in each of his five races and won them all in Neil Fowler Motorsport-prepared cars. Having sold last year's Classic FF1600 title-winning Van Diemen RF80, Jackson substituted his 1971 Winkelmann WDF2 for Saturday's pre-1982 double-header. He aced both, either side of the first Historic FF1600 round and the sole Formula Junior encounter. On Sunday, Jackson completed his gold haul in Historic FF1600.

The FFord races, run in memory of local hero and race school pioneer Jim Russell, at the scene of the inaugural British Racing and Sports Car Festivals of 1972-1975,

were far from straightforward for Jackson. Henry Chart – in a Van Diemen RF81, 10 years younger than the Palliser product, rebadged for its US marketeer Bob Winkelmann – pressured Jackson throughout the Classic events, finishing 0.184s shy in the latter.

Chasers Jordan Harrison (Lola T540), Samuel Harrison (Elden Mk8), Sam Mitchell (Merlyn Mk20) and Simon Toyne (Lola T200) underlined the category's chassis miscellany in the opening race.

The Historic era's mix ran even deeper. Linton Stutely (Royale RP3A) and Tom McArthur (in Simon Hadfield's Titan Mk4) kept Jackson honest initially, before he gapped their fights, which netted a second and third apiece.

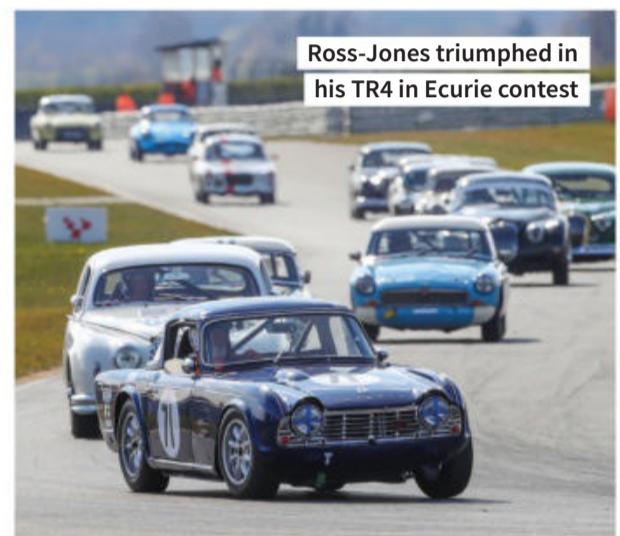
Double champion Callum Grant started from the back of Sunday's sequel, legacy of a CWP problem, but charged back to sixth behind Horatio Fitz-Simon – nursing a misfire on his Merlyn Mk20A – and Brian Morris (Lola T202). Welcome returnee Max Bartell (ex-Jackson March 709) was seventh.

Defending Formula Junior champion Jackson's Brabham BT2 finished 42s clear of Ford France Lotus duellists Nick Fennell and Adrian Russell despite careering off on oil on the exit of Coram in the closing stages. "I was on a purple lap," he said afterwards.

Mark Woodhouse (Lotus 20/22) and hard-charging Tim Child (ex-Curt Lincoln Cooper T59) got the better of Lee Mowle

Charteris took one Clubmans win before drama in race two





(20/22) in the squabble for fourth. New septuagenarian Ray Mallock (U2) and Nic Carlton-Smith (Kieft) also went the distance, winning their classes. The latter's rival John Chisholm's race ended in an extraordinary dust storm when his Gemini Mk3A shed a wheel at Brundle.

Benn Simms' pace from lights-out in Historic FF2000 presaged an accomplished victory per day in his Reynard SF77. Graham Fennimore and his team worked until midnight on Friday to repair their SF81 after a testing shunt, and he qualified second and finished there both times. Greg Robertson and Andrew Storer were consistently best of the rest, with 1979 EFDA Euroseries champion Adrian Reynard adding to their race one fun.

The 25-minute Road Sports races were entertaining. Second-row starter Paul Tooms burst Larry Kennedy's red Lotus Elan between poleman John Davison's black one and Peter Garland's Morgan +8 to lead the Historic field into Riches. Davison went back ahead at Agostini on lap two and stayed there, although Tooms set fastest lap. Garland wrested third in a dogfight with Jonathan Stringer (Lotus 7 S2).

Younger Morgans topped the 29-car, 10-manufacturer, 70s Road Sports contest. Will and Richard Plant rumbled clear of former Historic F1 Arrows racer Dave Karaskas (TVR 3000M) and triple champion Jeremy Clark, whose Elan's engine blew passing the pits. TVR newbie Antony Ross enjoyed battling Karaskas and shadowed him home, ahead of Lotus men Jim Dean (Europa) and Nigel Armstrong (Elan).

Five more series joined in on Sunday. Caterham graduate Dan Williamson (Ford Falcon) blitzed the Historic Touring Car races after Pete Hallford's Mustang bogged on the grid both times, delaying the Lotus Cortina posse and Steve Platts' Singer Chamois. Hallford and Mike Gardiner (Cortina) ran the Falcon closest.

Classic Clubmans was drama-riddled, Mark Charteris (Mallock Mk20/21) winning the opener from a sizzling pole lap. Clive Wood – from last following fuel pump failure on his Mallock Mk20B – bagged second having avoided John Harrison, whose front wheel bearing collapsed at Coram, locking the brake.

Wood led the second salvo, but his throttle cable snapped after Charteris had rounded him at Riches. Charteris' propshaft then let go scarily, leaving Adrian Holey's Mk20B to win from the back, beating pits starter Mike Lane. Tom Muirhead topped the FF1600-engined division after a misfire forced earlier winner Tom Eustace's retirement.

Low Dempsey Racing's young Americans Max Esterson and Colin Queen used both Heritage FF1600 contests for experience, clear of Ben Edwards in his ex-Martin Byford Champion of Snetterton-winning Van Diemen RF92 both times. Allan Ross-Jones romped to the Ecurie Classic Racing enduro in his Triumph TR4. Pursuer Mark Holme (MGB) trumped Glenn Pearson/Peter Dorlin (Jaguar Mk1) at the pitstop, leaving Dorlin to stave off Colin Kingsnorth (MGB).

MARCUS PYE

SNETTERTON WEEKEND WINNERS

CLASSIC F3/URS FF2000

Race 1 Andy Smith (March 783)
Race 2 Benn Tilley (March 743)

CLASSIC FORMULA FORD

Races 1 & 2 Cam Jackson (Winkelmann WDF2)

HISTORIC FORMULA FORD

Races 1 & 2 Cam Jackson (Winkelmann WDF2)

HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR

Cam Jackson (Brabham BT2)

HISTORIC FF2000

Races 1 & 2 Benn Simms (Reynard SF77)

HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS

John Davison (Lotus Elan S1)

70s ROAD SPORTS

William Plant (Morgan +8)

HISTORIC TOURING CARS

Races 1 & 2 Dan Williamson (Ford Falcon)

CLASSIC CLUBMANS

Race 1 Mark Charteris (Mallock Mk20/21)
Race 2 Adrian Holey (Mallock Mk20)

HERITAGE FORMULA FORD

Races 1 & 2 Max Esterson (Ray GR18)

ECURIE CLASSIC RACING

Allan Ross-Jones (Triumph TR4)

80s PRODUCTION CHALLENGE

Chris Dear (Peugeot 205 GTI)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Harridge flies to Vee victories after close fights

CADWELL PARK

750MC

17 APRIL

James Harridge, Olly Waind and Alistair Camp each celebrated victory doubles as the Formula Vee, Clio 182 and Hot Hatch championships starred in the 750 Motor Club's enjoyable 13-race programme at sunny Cadwell Park last weekend.

Harridge, the defending champion, faced former title winners Craig Pollard – back out having not competed last year – and Daniel Hands in a pair of highly charged and unpredictable Vee thrillers.

Race one was decided by ill fortune for Pollard at the Gooseneck in the closing stages. He went right to lap Rachel Swain, just as she moved the same way to let him by. Front-to-rear contact damaged the nose of Pollard's Bears GAC and the lurking Harridge's Maverick was through for the win. Hands, who had initially run with Pollard and Harridge until losing touch with a sticking throttle on his AHS Dominator, inherited second, while Pollard was sixth after pitting.

It was the same sticking throttle that inadvertently took Hands past Pollard into the lead at Mansfield in race two.



Reigning champion Harridge pounced on Pollard's backmarker woe to win opener

"I couldn't stop!" said Hands. "Luckily, Craig saw me and avoided me."

Hobbled, Hands somehow then kept Pollard behind for several laps, but their fighting enabled Harridge, up from fifth to third after a messy opening tour, to quickly home in on them. He duly picked them off on successive laps to lead as Pollard moved into second, while Hands – his throttle problems worsening – fell away in third.

Unlike the first race, lapped cars failed to cause an upset and Harridge clung on to win from Pollard by 0.36 seconds. With Hands also on their pace, it seems the Vee title fight could be a highlight of the British club scene in 2021.

Waind's two wins – his first in Clios – were courtesy of late moves on Jack Dwane, who led both races until the closing stages. The second race was a real nail-biter as Waind, shrugging off a handling imbalance, left his move until the final lap with a lunge into Park. Scott Edgar was twice third, but only after David Garside – on course for a maiden podium – lost the place in race two with an unfortunate off.

Camp had to pass the similar Honda Civic of reigning Clio champion Ryan Polley to win the first Hot Hatch race – the latter actually falling to third as Philip Wright's Civic also slipped by.

Lockie shines as VSCC season springs into action

SILVERSTONE
VSCC
17 APRIL

The sun was shining on Silverstone for the Vintage Sports-Car Club's Spring Start meeting and Calum Lockie basked in it as he came from the back of the grid to win the Fox & Nicholl Trophy Race.

Lockie was fastest in practice but, because he was listed as a reserve, it meant he had to start from the back,



as per VSCC regulations. But that didn't deter the Delahaye 135MS driver, and he stormed through the pack, getting up to second by the fourth lap. Once there, he had to chase down Christopher Mann, who had led the race from the start, and he finally passed him for the lead on lap 11 of 12, just before Mann retired due to an issue with his Alfa Romeo Monza, promoting Richard Pilkington (Talbot T26 SS) to second.

There was an almighty scrap for the win in the Vintage, Pre-war and Pre-1961 Racing Car contest between the Kurtis Indy-Roadster of Frederick Harper and the Ferrari 246 of Richard Wilson. Harper managed to get the leap on Wilson's polesitting Ferrari at the start, but Wilson refused to allow Harper to remain at the front for long, regaining his lead on lap five of 18.

But the tables turned again on lap 13 when Wilson spun, allowing Harper to get back through and create a gap of two seconds. Comfortably in the lead, Harper

decided to ease his pace slightly, which allowed Wilson to close in again in the last few laps. But, despite having got on to the tail of the Kurtis, Wilson was unable to make another move for the lead and had to settle for second, with Harper taking the win by a mere two tenths of a second.

Bernardo Hartogs took a straightforward lights-to-flag victory in the Fifties Sports Car Racing & VSCC Hawthorn International Trophy race in his Lotus 15, beating the HWM shared by Martin Hunt and Patrick Blakeney-Edwards, while Robin Tului achieved the same feat in the VSCC Specials Race, which was the opening race of the day.

Tului, driving a Riley Menasco Pirate, ended up dominating the race – finishing 32.65s ahead of his nearest challenger, Mike James's Riley – but he didn't have it all his own way in the opening stages. Tului and James battled wheel-to-wheel for the lead early on, before Tului managed to break clear on lap four of 12. And from there on, there was no looking back as he consistently



Camp later won the second contest with ease from Wright and Kris McCloy. Reigning champion David Drinkwater won Class C in both races but really had his work cut out defending from 17-year-old Junior Saloon Cars graduate Olivia Martin's similar BMW Compact.

By contrast, 67-year-old John Village achieved a career-first win at Cadwell in the second of two Historic 750 Formula races in his 'JV2' special. This was after finishing second to Richard Prior's JGS in race one.

Aaron Cooke and Paul Cook were the Toyota MR2 winners, the latter after runaway leader Shaun Traynor had a spill at the Gooseneck. The large entry

was split into three groups, each with two races, but the third contest had to be pulled from the schedule because of delays caused by two red flag incidents – the first a pile-up shortly after the start that eliminated the cars of Cook, Vere Oldbridge and Peter Higton. The death of competitor Mick Nicholls in testing also overshadowed the MR2 races.

Having missed out to Nick Starkey's Caterham R300 by 0.03s earlier in the day, Del Shelton's BMW was dominant in the second of two Allcomers races added in place of the Armed Forces Race Challenge, called off amid continuing COVID-19 restrictions.

CARL MCKELLAR



circulated more than two seconds a lap faster than the rest of the field.

George Shackleton won both Formula 3 500 Owners Association races from pole position, finishing ahead of Chris Wilson's Cooper on both occasions. Wilson was in a race-long battle with the Staride Mk3 of Xavier Kingsland in the first contest but, while Kingsland was third each time, he couldn't stay close with Wilson second time round, finishing nearly 20s behind.

Barry Cannell emerged victorious in the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association race for Pre-1966 GP cars driving a Brabham BT11A, but he too had his work cut out, fending off Will Nuthall's Cooper T53 throughout the 20-minute race. Nuthall led from pole, but Cannell grabbed the advantage halfway through and managed to hold on to win by a mere two tenths.

ROB HANSFORD

WEEKEND WINNERS



CADWELL PARK FORMULA VEE
Races 1 & 2 James Harridge (Maverick)

CLIO 182
Races 1 & 2 Olly Waind

HOT HATCH
Races 1 & 2 Alistair Camp (Honda Civic)

HISTORIC 750 FORMULA
Race 1 Richard Prior (JGS III)
Race 2 John Village (Village V2, above)

TOYOTA MR2
Race 1 Aaron Cooke (Roadster)
Race 2 Paul Cook (Mk2)

ALLCOMERS PRODUCTION SPORTS & SALOON CARS
Race 1 Nick Starkey (Caterham R300)
Race 2 Del Shelton (BMW E36 M3)

SILVERSTONE FOX & NICHOLL TROPHY RACE
Calum Lockie (Delahaye 135MS)

VINTAGE, PRE-WAR & PRE-1961 RACE CARS
Frederick Harper (Kurtis Indy-Roadster)

FISCAR & VSCC HAWTHORN INTERNATIONAL TROPHY RACE
Bernardo Hartogs (Lotus 15, below)

VSCC SPECIALS RACE FOR THE SILVERSTONE TROPHY
Robin Tului (Riley Menasco Pirate)

FORMULA 3 500 OWNERS ASSOCIATION
Races 1 & 2 George Shackleton (Cooper MkXI)

HGPCA RACE FOR PRE-1966 GP CARS
Barry Cannell (Brabham BT11A)

ALLCOMERS SCRATCH RACE FOR PRE-WAR CARS
Julian Wilton (ERA R7B)

HANDICAP RACE FOR PRE-WAR CARS
Race 1 Wilfred Cawley (Austin 7 Special)
Race 2 Ben Maeers (GN Parker)



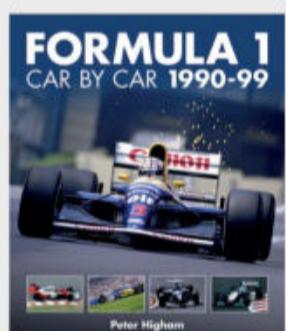
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FINISHING STRAIGHT

IN THE MEDIA • ARCHIVE • IN DEFENCE OF...



A DEFINING DECADE FOR FORMULA 1



BOOK
FORMULA 1: CAR BY CAR
1990-99
RRP £50

The 1990s. For Formula 1 fans, it was the decade when Nigel Mansell finally claimed a long overdue title in 1992; when one of the championship's greatest drivers, Ayrton Senna, lost his life on a dark weekend at Imola in 1994; and when rising star Michael Schumacher heralded the beginning of a new era.

With mass sponsorship, a limit for the first time on the amount of teams allowed to enter the championship, and a push for safety improvements that continues to this day, the 1990s could be seen as the defining decade that began the transformation of F1 into what we see now.

It's also the subject of Peter Higham's latest Car by Car instalment, which has already covered the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Like previous volumes, the book is broken into 10 chapters/seasons, from the infamous first-corner crash between Senna and Alain Prost at Suzuka to Mika Hakkinen giving McLaren a double drivers' title at the end of the decade, via spells of Williams and Benetton dominance.

It doesn't offer a blow-by-blow account of each race – which isn't the point of this book in the first place – but there's still a startling amount of detail, perhaps unsurprisingly considering Higham's vast career and experience within motorsport, including

a 30-year stint with this very publication.

Each chapter opens with a brief overview of the season, changes in regulations, contract negotiations and general rumblings that take place during the course of any F1 campaign. Who knew, for example, that Singapore tried to host a grand prix as early as 1990? Wider world events and issues are also touched on, including mention of the Gulf War and state of the global economy.

Higham leaves no stone unturned in giving a broad but thorough analysis of each team and every car that took to the track during this 10-year period, and gives minute detail on how each iteration was updated during the course of a season.

There's also mention of the drivers and the highs and lows during the campaign, alongside a wider context of what was going on behind the scenes at each squad, such as the uphill struggles of AGS to find money to keep it on the grid or the revolving door of personnel at Ferrari at the start of the decade.

At the end of the chapter there is a comprehensive and handy breakdown of every driver's results across the season, including each version of car they drove, and final drivers' and constructors' points tables.

To accompany the informative and at times amusing words are more than 550 colour images courtesy of Motorsport Images scattered throughout the 303-page volume.

The book comes into its own when seeing side-by-side comparisons of different cars from the same year and the subtle (or sometimes startling) differences between each model, such



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as Benetton's B190B-Ford and B191-Ford that were both used during the 1991 season.

One criticism of the book could be levied at the fact that many pages contain up to four images of the same car, although a clear effort has been made to include shots from different angles with sparks and locked brakes included – anything that can make a single-car shot exciting.

Having said that, for someone such as this reviewer who grew up and became hooked on F1 in the 1990s, it takes a great deal of time to get bored of looking at the beautiful Ferrari 641, dominant Williams FW14B or the quirky liveries of the Larrousse team in 1994, among many more.

At £50 it's not the cheapest motor racing book, but then it's not the most expensive either, and for its quality, in-depth information and photography it's worth every penny and is a fine addition to the Car by Car collection.

Roll on the 2000s.

STEFAN MACKLEY

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Formula E

Round 3

Valencia, Spain

24-25 April

TV Live Eurosport 2, Sat 1330, Quest, Sat 1400, Eurosport 1, Sun 1230 Available via BBC Red Button, iPlayer and BBC Sport website

IndyCar

Round 2/15

St Petersburg, USA

25 April

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1700

Super Formula

Round 2/7

Suzuka, Japan

25 April

TV Livestream on Motorsport.tv Sun 0600

24H Series

Round 3/8

Paul Ricard, France

24 April

NASCAR Cup

Round 10/36

Talladega, USA

25 April

TV Live Free Sports, Sun 1900

NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 8/33

Talladega, USA

24 April

Brazilian Stock Cars

Round 1

Goiania, Brazil

25 April

Croatia Rally

World Rally Championship

Round 3/12

Zagreb, Croatia

22-25 April

TV Live BT Sport 2, Sat 1000, BT Sport 1, Sun 0730, 1200

Hightlights

BT Sport 3, Fri 1100, Sat 2230, Sun 2230, Red Bull TV, Fri 2100, Sat 2100, Sun 2100 Live coverage on wrc.com All live service via WRC+

UK MOTORSPORT

Snetterton MSVR*

24 April

Mini Challenge Trophy, MSVR Allcomers, Radical Challenge, Radical SR1 Trophy

Lydden Hill CMMC*

24 April

Classic Challenge, Intermarque Silhouettes, Modified Ford Saloons, Southern Tin Tops, Super Saloons, Track Attack

Donington Park MSVR*

24-25 April

Elise Trophy, EnduroKa,

Focus Cup, Heritage FF1600, MSV SuperCup, Production Golfs/BMWs, Production Golf GTIs, Toyo Tires Saloons, Z Cars

Cadwell Park BARC*

24-25 April

2CVs, Hyundai Coupes, Junior Saloons, Legends, Mazda Max5, Mighty Minis

Silverstone 750MC*

24-25 April

116 Trophy, 750 Formula, Alfa Romeos, BMW Car Club, Classic Stock Hatch, F1000, Ma7da, RoadSports, Sport Specials, Sports 1000, Type R Trophy

Silverstone BARC*

24-25 April

Britcar Endurance/Trophy, Classic Touring Cars BOSS/Thunder, CTC Pre-'66, CTC Pre-'83, CTC Pre-'93/'03, Mini Miglia, Mini Se7en, TCR UK, Touring Car Trophy, VW Racing Cup

Brands Hatch MGCC*

24-25 April

BCV8s, Metro Cup, MG Cup, MG Trophy, Midget Sprite Challenge

*Behind closed doors



FERRARIO/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

Formula E makes its race debut at Valencia



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Michael Schumacher checks the mirrors of his Ferrari as Jacques Villeneuve threads his Sauber through a gap in the logjam caused by the perpendicularly parked Minardi of

Christijan Albers, who had spun on lap 24 of the 2005 Monaco Grand Prix. Schumacher broke his front wing after thumping into the Red Bull of David Coulthard, who'd been first to arrive on the scene and at this point

was already en route to the pits and retirement. With a new wing fitted, Schumacher finished the race in seventh place. Albers got going again under the safety car and went on to finish 14th and last, five laps down.

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IN DEFENCE OF...

DRIVE TO SURVIVE FANS

While *Drive to Survive* has brought droves of new fans to Formula 1, boosting viewing figures and drawing in a younger audience, some are unhappy with its effect. Complaints come from long-time fans, many of them unhappy that newcomers ‘don’t know anything about F1 history’ or are only watching because of the overdramatised illusion given by the Netflix series.

But whatever their motivation, surely more fans can only be a good thing. Petty gatekeeping on social media is pointless. Whether you’ve been watching for one race or a hundred, we all share the same passion. After all, everyone has to start somewhere, whether that means they’ve watched F1 for 25 years or since the start of 2021 after stumbling across the series on Netflix.

F1 has undergone a huge image shift in recent years, bringing much-needed younger and more diverse fans to the paddock. My family are a prime example of how *DTS* has done its job well – having never been motorsport enthusiasts, they binge-watched all three series before

the start of this season and are now hoping to go to a grand prix.

DTS might be exaggerated for dramatic effect, but it has to be to draw people in and create a narrative arc strong enough to keep viewers who might not otherwise watch F1 interested. And it has clearly had an effect – last month’s Bahrain GP was the most watched race ever on Sky Sports, peaking at 2.23 million viewers, following the release of the third series.

Leading F1 figures also recognise the value in as many people watching it as possible, with more viewers bringing more exposure to sponsors and thus more money to teams. While Red Bull boss Christian Horner has said he “winced constantly” while watching the series, he recognised it was “very positive for F1”.

So rather than criticising new fans for ‘not knowing enough’ or questioning their motive for watching – which is often rooted in sexism – these self-appointed gatekeepers to the F1 community perhaps should be embracing *DTS* fans instead.

MEGAN WHITE

IN NEXT WEEK’S ISSUE

World Endurance preview

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR AT THE START OF A NEW ERA



TOYOTA

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